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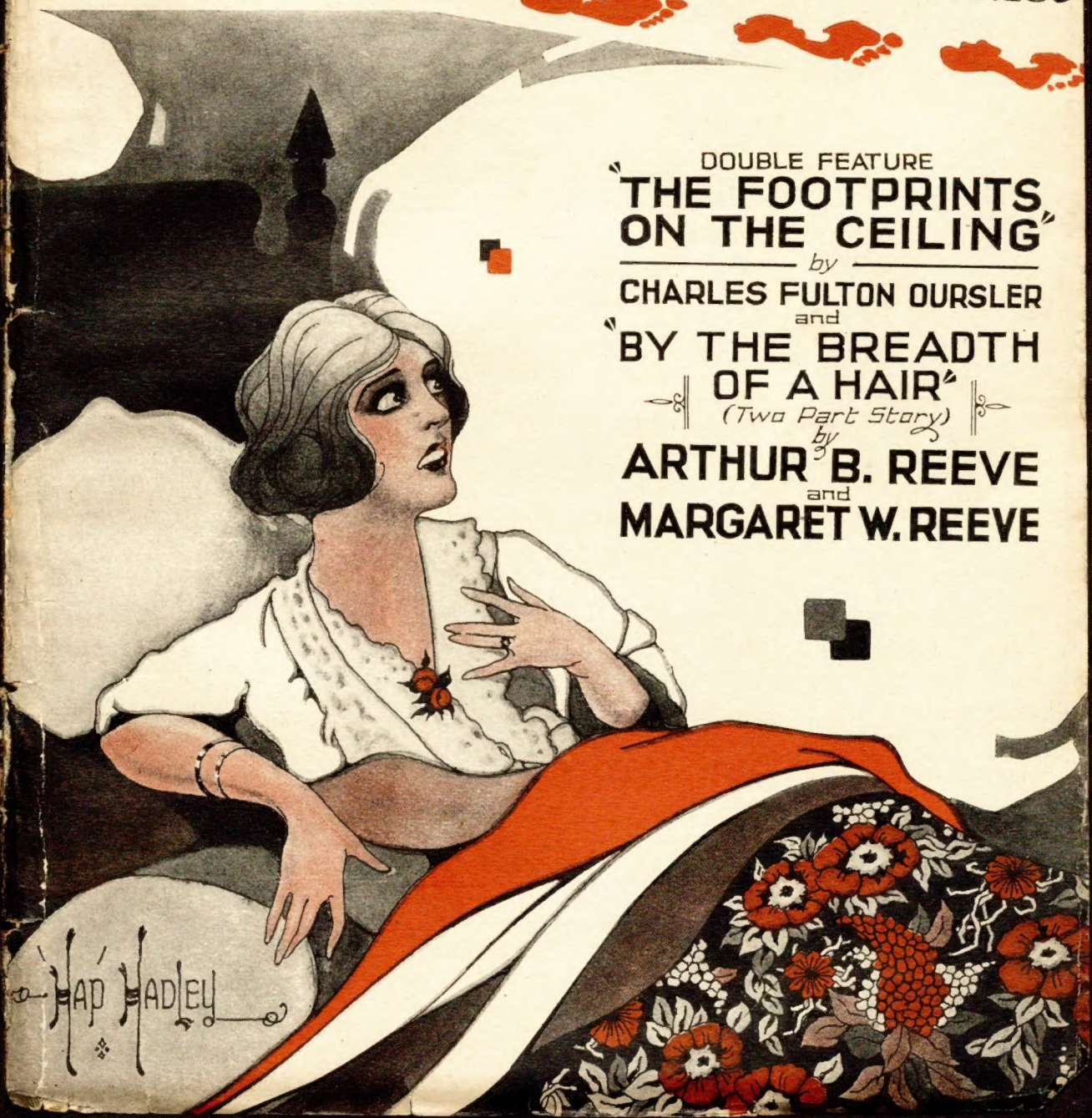

DOUBLE FEATURE

"THE FOOTPRINTS ON THE CEILING"

by

CHARLES FULTON OURSLER

and

"BY THE BREADTH OF A HAIR"

(Two Part Story)

by

ARTHUR B. REEVE

and

MARGARET W. REEVE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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A Great Number Coming

THE most skillful burglar in the world makes one mistake that puts detectives on his trail and leads to an exciting chase. Driven into a corner, the crook has one desperate chance. What it was you can learn by reading the feature story in the next issue of this magazine. It was written by THOMAS RIPLEY and is entitled

"The One Chance"

Do not forget that the continuation and conclusion of ARTHUR B. REEVE'S remarkable two-part detective story appears in the next number. It is more interesting than the instalment in this issue. No one can afford to miss reading Part Two of

"BY THE BREADTH OF A HAIR"

All the best short-story writers have been sending us their finest efforts and we will have a splendid assortment of sketches in No. 151. The plots are clever and the stories swing along with unusual dash and interest. Watch for these titles:

"HIDDEN DEATH," by Arthur Seymour Witt
"A BIT OF PSYCHOLOGY," by Charles C. Watson
"MASKS OF MIDNIGHT," by James W. Eagan
"SAWBONES SMASHES A RECORD," by Edgar Daniel Kramer

We will also have an exceptionally interesting article by the celebrated author BENJAMIN CALL, relating to the relentless pursuit of criminals by the latest approved scientific methods. You will be intensely interested in

"THE LONG-FINGERED HAND OF SCIENCE"

In addition to all the above-mentioned matter the next issue will contain numerous short articles on odd and interesting subjects that cannot fail to please our readers.

THE EDITOR.

The FOOTPRINTS on the CEILING.

by Charles Fulton Oursler

CHAPTER ONE

THE hour was midnight.

Outside the library windows of the home of Eric Garth, private consulting detective, a November storm of wind and cold rain moaned and howled.

The logs on the hearth sputtered and crackled cozily, spitting red sparks upward with each angry gust of the storm.

Eric Garth put down his fountain pen with a sigh of relief. He shoved aside the papers littering his desk, glad that the notes on a case just completed were at last set down, ready for the typist in the morning.

"Now," he reflected, "I shall smoke a pipe and then go to bed."

Perhaps there was a pang of regret in his mind—a tinge of loneliness. Sometimes Garth believed himself the loneliest of men, although he kept the opinion carefully to himself. He was an orphan and a bachelor. At the age of thirty-five he found himself the most successful private detective in America, with many warm friends. His life held for him the applause of the world, the consciousness of great success and all the money a man could decently spend. But there was one thing lacking.

He would never admit, even to himself, what it was. There was a lack—something that he missed, a loneliness nothing could fill, but beyond that his stubborn mind refused to go.

Now, as he lighted his pipe and sank back gratefully in the big armchair by the fireplace, this loneliness stole upon him even more poignantly than he had ever known it before. The knock that came softly to his door a moment afterward was unexpected, but it was welcome because it drove away his lonely thoughts.

"Come in!" he called.

The door opened softly and a small, yellow man in a blue dressing-robe stood before him. He was Kaji, the personal attendant of the detective. Kaji was a Japanese.

"Yes, Kaji? I thought you were asleep."

Kaji never sleeps when the great master is awake," replied the Jap, his face impassive. "There is a visitor below."

"A visitor! At this hour?"

"She is an old woman. She came in an automobile. There is a chauffeur at the wheel of the car and another person, I know not what kind of individual, seated in the sedan. But the old woman is in the reception-room. She is crying."

"An old woman crying in the reception-room?"

"Yes, great master."

"Suppose you bring her in here, Kaji."

A few moments later there came through the door a little old woman, not more than five feet high, bent and wrinkled, but with an air of indomitable respectability about her. There were undeniable tears on her withered cheeks, and her black-gloved hands twined together excitedly as she courtesied to the detective.

Eric Garth studied her keenly. Her little gray suit was of modish cut, her hat fitted snugly down over her gray hair and her nose was neatly powdered. Under other circumstances her blue eyes might have had an extremely knowing and modern twinkle.

"Won't you sit down?" asked Eric Garth, offering her a chair.

The old lady sat down with a gasp and immediately plunged into the business of her call.

"You are Eric Garth, are you not? I am Mrs. Amy Andrews. I am the companion of Miss Louise Greenwood, of 14000 West End Avenue, and oh, dear Mr. Grath, do help me, or I don't know what will happen to us!"

Her eyes were distended with anxiety and her voice shook so as to make her words almost inaudible. Garth said in his most soothing tones:

"Now just sit still a while, and then tell me all about it. Kaji shall bring you some water."

After she had sipped the water and smoothed her hair she gave Garth a grateful look and launched into her story. She had lived in the household of Amos Greenwood since the birth of his daughter Louise, in the capacity of nurse and governess to the child. A close attachment had sprung up between the little girl and her nurse, and Mrs. Andrews developed into more of a companion than a governess. Louise was now an orphan, both parents having died several years before, and was under the care of her uncle, Benson Drummond, while Mrs. Andrews remained to look after her charge.

Mrs. Andrews then dramatically announced that she was convinced the apartment they were living in was haunted.

"But, my dear Mrs. Andrews, how can an apartment be haunted? I'm afraid your nerves are a little upset," said Garth, patting the old lady's hand reassuringly.

"They *are* upset, and the apartment *is* haunted. If you had lived through the scares I've lived through this past week you'd swear the place was haunted, too. Why, I can't sit down to sew or read without hearing those sounds!"

"Sounds?"

"Yes. I wouldn't call them noises; they're not loud enough. They're just sounds."

"And what are the sounds like?"

"Of bare feet pattering around! And I've seen footprints on the ceiling."

Garth leaned forward and gazed into his visitor's eyes long and earnestly, as if to assure himself of her sanity. He seemed satisfied with what he saw, for he leaned back in his chair again and said:

"Go on. Tell me more about these bare feet."

Mrs. Andrews's voice shook as she said:

"Wherever I go, in the bedrooms, in the kitchen, in the living-room, I think I hear those bare feet following me. They patter along, sometimes in front of me, sometimes behind me. I lie awake at night listening to them. I feel that I am going crazy! We heard them so clearly tonight I couldn't bear it another moment; and so I thought of coming to you for help, and brought Louise with me. Louise is almost hysterical from the sounds."

"Oh, the young lady is with you? Where did you leave her?"

"Down in the car."

"Suppose we go down to see her."

He assisted the old lady with her neat little coat, and together they descended to the street. A beautifully appointed gray sedan was parked at the curb. As the detective and Mrs. Andrews stepped from the doorway of the apartment-house a tall girl, closely wrapped in gray squirrel, was in the act of leaping from the car, a look of horhor in her large, gray eyes. The chauffeur, a tall negro, was trying to pull her back into the car.

They ran toward her, and Garth caught her as she stumbled from the running-

board. She threw herself into Mrs. Andrews's arms and began to sob convulsively. Garth got them both into the car and drew the gray silk curtains. The tall girl was now crying softly, and Mrs. Andrews was patting her shoulder and murmuring:

"Louise, darling. Louise, honey. Look, I've brought Mr. Garth. He's a detective and he'll help us. Look up, dear, and speak to Mr. Garth."

Louise lifted her head. Several honey-colored curls were escaping from the squirrel toque on her head, the large, gray eyes were swimming in tears and the small, full mouth was trembling piteously as she tried to greet Garth politely. Garth thought her the sweetest and most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

"What is the trouble, Miss Greenwood? Has anything happened in the last few moments?"

She pointed mutely to the mudguard of the machine. They looked.

Plainly outlined on a slight film of dust was the imprint of a bare human foot!

The grilled lanterns hanging beside the portals of the apartment-house threw a pale, yellow light on the dusty impression of five long toes, the indentation of the arch and the round of the heel. A drop of rain descended lightly and spattered on the tip of the great toe. The two women were trembling violently.

Garth whipped out his magnifying-glass and bent down close to the footprint, peering at it long and earnestly. At last he whirled and confronted Mrs. Andrews and Louise.

"You say you have been hearing the pattering of bare feet all over your house?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And they follow you everywhere, no matter where you go?"

The old lady nodded, her eyes glued intently on those of the detective, as if hoping in them to read a solution and the promise of help.

With a final glance at the footprint on the mudguard, Garth said:

"Now let's hurry up to your apartment. I imagine there'll be something there to interest us."

He seated the women carefully. Louise was dabbing at her eyes with a scrap of white lace, and Garth concealed a sigh of sympathy for the tall, graceful girl with the honey-colored curls. He slid his large bulk into the back seat next to Louise, and was in the act of leaning back luxuriously when he straightened up suddenly and looked at the girl.

"Miss Greenwood," he said, "what have you in your pocket?"

"Why—nothing!" she replied.

"Yes, you have. You have something in your pocket."

"But—I never carry things in my pockets. I hate bulgy pockets. I carry a bag. See, this is my bag."

"I'm sorry, my dear young lady, to seem rude and insistent. But you *have* got something in your pocket. Take it out, please."

Louise favored him with her iciest stare and made no move. So Garth, being always a man of action, plunged his hand into the gray squirrel wrap. His eyes suddenly lit up with a curious glow. He slowly withdrew his hand. It was clutching something. All eyes were riveted on what he was holding. Old Mrs. Andrews swayed and fell back against the cushions of the car. Louise gave a smothered cry. Garth held the object up to the light.

It was the wax model of a human foot!

CHAPTER TWO

GARTH turned the object over in his hand and then asked Louise:

"What do you know about this thing?"

"Mr. Grath, believe me, this is the first time I have ever laid eyes on it. I can swear to that."

She was holding one slim hand against her throat and the words came with great difficulty.

Garth addressed her again, with great gentleness.

"Miss Greenwood, I am deeply sorry to distress you, but you must give me all the help you can. Otherwise, how can I help you? Now I have a request to make of

you. Just put your thumb on the heel of this wax foot."

The girl complied. Garth took out his glass and peered intently through it at the foot. There were a dozen other thumb-prints on the wax cast, including the latest one, and they were all identically the same! They were, all of them, the thumb-prints of Louise.

The detective whistled a few bars of "Suwannee River," scratched his ear and finally said with a little sigh:

"Well, let's go on up to your house."

It was a silent trio who alighted at the door of a gray brick apartment-house on West End Avenue. The silence continued as the elevator bore them to the top floor and still continued as Mrs. Andrews let them in with a latch-key. As the hall-door closed behind them and they found themselves in a softly lighted reception-room, Garth's quick eye espied some one slip into a door at the end of the room beyond the one in which they were all standing. Mrs. Andrews led Garth quickly to a chair in the large room beyond.

He sank into it comfortably and cast an appreciative eye about him. The color scheme of the room was ivory and rose. Soft rugs and glowing lamps made for material comfort, while a few small etchings and Japanese prints delighted the eye of the soul.

Louise had shed her wrap and was standing, nervously tense, beside a wrought-iron lamp, her slender fingers braiding and unbraiding the silken fringe. Mrs. Andrews had perched herself on a low stool near Garth. Suddenly Garth sat bolt upright and said:

"Mrs. Andrews, bring here to me every single soul in this place, one by one. Don't leave any one out!"

The little old lady smilingly extended her hand to an electric button near by. In a few seconds two neat maids stood primly before them. Garth fired a volley of terse questions at them. They both denied having heard of any footsteps and seemed utterly astonished at his questioning, and at the sight of the wax foot in Garth's outstretched hand they both shrieked and clutched each other frantically. He finally dismissed them and turned again to Mrs. Andrews.

"Now bring on the rest of the folks."

"There is no one else important here, Mr. Garth. Those two maids are all the servants we have."

He made no reply, but rose ponderously, heaving a prodigious sigh. He strode across the room. Mrs. Andrews also rose and fluttered beside him, a little cry on her lips. She laid a restraining hand on his arm, but he shook it off. He continued his long stride until he reached the door at the far end of the next room. The two women were at his side, Mrs. Andrews tugging at his sleeve and saying:

"Listen—there's not a soul here. Nothing is in that room, I tell you! It's——"

But the sleuth had already flung wide the door and was straining his eyes into the interior of the room. The light was extremely dim, a sort of twilight, and Garth could make out nothing. Then suddenly a weight struck him against the chest and a swiftly moving object brushed past him and darted across the two intervening rooms to the hall-door. Garth whirled around.

It was the bent figure of a youth running in an ungainly manner, his body curved forward as if shielding something precious from the gaze of the world. His awkward loping gait brought him finally to the door leading to the public hall, and while he was fumbling with the lock Garth caught up with him and swung the boy around.

It was a remarkable face which the detective was gazing down upon. Pale and drawn, its two outstanding features were the mouth and eyes. Flabby, pinkish lips hung loosely in a foolish grin, the grin of an imbecile. But the eyes were a velvety brown, large and lustrous, and appeared to Garth to mirror all the tragedy this earth has ever known and some of celestial tragedy as well. They now filled with tears and dropped from Garth's wondering face to the thing he was clutching in his hands.

Garth made a dive for it. There was a short struggle, a piercing shriek from the boy, and Garth held aloft a crudely improvised doll, made of a whisk-broom

wrapped in a handkerchief of pale green silk. Mrs. Andrews snatched the toy out of Garth's hands and restored it to the moaning boy. She then drew the youth's cowering form into her arms and faced Garth indignantly.

"Why can't you let him alone? He has absolutely nothing to do with this business. Can't you see he's—he's"—her voice trailed off into a whisper—"he's half-witted? He's my poor little son who isn't right in his head!"

She began to weep softly.

Garth fell to stroking his chin with one hand, while the other smoothed his ruffled black locks. He did not know what to make of this new phenomenon. Could the mysterious pattering be ascribed to this half-witted boy who played with dolls? If there were such a possibility, what of the girl Louise's thumb-prints all over the wax foot. And there was something else. Ah, yes, the footprint on the mudguard of the car!

"Hell's fire!" ran his thoughts as he stood there, "I haven't been so stumped in years."

He looked around for the boy. He was moving around the room in a most peculiar way. He would slide up to each piece of furniture in turn, look furtively all around him, then, grinning craftily to himself, would touch lightly the table or chair or lamp in front of him. He completed a circuit of the room and then stood broodingly, his doll cradled in his arms, staring at nothing with those great tragic eyes of his.

Garth walked to the table nearest him and examined the boy's finger-prints. He went to all the furniture and did the same. Then he slowly drew the wax foot from his pocket. and slowly he examined it beneath his faithful glass. He grunted. Back and forth several times from furniture to foot he looked. No. It was beyond all doubt not true. The thumb-prints on the furniture and those on the wax foot were entirely different. Yet why had old Mrs. Andrews tried to hide the half-witted boy from the detective?

And if Louise were herself responsible for the mysterious pattering sounds and the footprints, why did she do it?

It was a pretty question.

Why?

CHAPTER THREE

AS Garth was sitting on the arm of an overstuffed armchair and thoughtfully stroking his neat, silk-clad ankle, the hall-door opened and shut and a second later a man entered the room. He was a round, rosy little man, with a smiling countenance fringed by fluffy white hair. He brought with him the smell of the crisp outdoors, and as he shed his brown overcoat he beamed benignly at the assembled company out of twinkling blue eyes.

"I say, I say," he remarked cheerfully, rubbing his hands, which were reddened by the wind.

Mrs. Andrews rose and presented the men to each other.

"Mr. Garth, this is Mr. Benson Drummond, the uncle of Louise. Mr. Drummond, this is Mr. Garth, who is going to help find where the footprints came from."

The rosy little man gave Garth a swift, piercing look, then became all twinkles again. He walked over to Garth with short, mincing steps and held out his hand.

"I say, this is a pleasure. Come into my study, will you? What abominable cold weather this is! Louise, my pet, how are you?"

Instead of replying, Louise suddenly threw back her head and laughed loudly, and as suddenly she began to sob wildly and with utter abandon. The square of lace in her fingers became torn to shreds, she clutched frantically at the throat of her dress as if she was choking and her entire frame was racked and shaking.

Drummond strode over to her and, putting his strong arms about her slender figure, spoke to her in a low, gentle voice:

"Poor little thing, this is too much for you to bear. You are to go to bed at once. And you are absolutely not to worry or fret. Mr. Garth is here to help you, and he

won't leave this house until he has helped us all. Now go into your room and lie down."

Still with his arm about her, he led her to the door. Garth had to admit that his brain was reeling. Surely this lovely, frail creature could harbor no guile in her breast. Her eyes were too honest. They were good eyes—he had seen enough of all kinds of eyes to know that. And yet what was one to think of a girl who went about with a wax foot concealed on her person? Lord, but he wished he could see a chink of light somewhere. In the meantime——

He turned back to Benson Drummond. The little man was standing in the doorway waiting.

"I say, Mr. Garth, do come into my study a while, will you? I suggested to Mrs. Andrews today that if there was more trouble she get you. Right this way. What say you to a glass of nice Madeira? Here we are. This is my little retreat. I say, old man, that chair over there is the most comfortable. Do take it."

Exactly like a fussy, puffing little steam-engine he towed Garth to his destination, a big, soft easy-chair drawn up to a low mahogany table. Having made his guest comfortable with a glass of rich brown Madeira, Benson Drummond lit a cigar and spoke:

"So they did call you in to help 'em look for footprints, eh? I am skeptical about the subject, Mr. Garth. What is all this fuss about footprints, pray? The dear ladies have been somewhat overwrought lately; from what cause I am at a loss to say. But their conversation is footprints, footprints, footprints, eternal and everlasting and unending footprints! Gad, sir, I give you my word that I have seen no footprints and heard no footsteps. To this I swear. Yet, damn it! I would rather see the walls lined with footprints and have them resounding in my ears than listen to these women much longer. The long and short of it is, my dear Mr. Garth, that these dear little ladies of mine are hysterical, and need a long rest or a holiday, or both!"

Garth twirled the stem of his wine-glass in his fingers. His eyes roved casually over the room, taking in its luxurious yet subdued furnishings, and coming back every now and then to rest on his chubby vis-à-vis. Who could have introduced this disrupting influence into this hitherto calm and orderly houeshold? Mrs. Andrews, Louise and Benson Drummond were all obviously gentlefolk, living the serene existence of gentility. They were "nice people"; this much was very patent to any observer. And yet——

"Mr. Drummond, you declare without reservation that you have never heard a single footfall, or seen a single footprint, around this house or in the vicinity of any one of its inmates, that you couldn't explain?"

"Oh, I swear it, old chap. I say, you simply must believe me. I never, never, never——"

Here the good old gentleman began to choke and grow purple. Garth poured him another libation of Madeira, which Mr. Drummond quickly poured down his dry throat.

"As I was remarking, I never heard or saw anything. I must believe it is only the vaporous imaginings of those hysterical women— or lose my own reason—for Mrs. Andrews is as clay, my good sir, in the hands of my ward Louise. She has a half-witted son, you know, and perhaps—but it is Louise who is primarily responsible for this nonsensical pootprint bogey."

"May I ask the young lady's age?"

"Certainly. She is twenty-one."

"But didn't I understand you to say that she is your ward?"

"That she is! That she is! Little Louise is my ward. Adorable child!"

"She can scarcely be twenty-one and at the same time be your ward. What is the answer?" was Garth's dry comment.

For answer Benson Drummond left his chair and went to the door. He assured himself that it was closed and that no one lurked without. Then he drew his chair close to Garth's and leaned forward portentously.

"I say, here's something that will explain much. Listen to me. I make no intimations regarding little Louise, who is the

apple of my eye. I raised the child from babyhood, sir; when my dear sister died she commended her little orphaned daughter to my care. She has been my most precious charge all these years."

Mr. Drummond was temporarily overcome by his feelings and held a handkerchief to his eyes. Then, leaning still farther forward, he resumed:

"I watched the child so carefully. Saw her blossom from long-legged childhood into the graceful, blooming creature you now see her to be. I say, how I did watch over that girl!"

"Why did you have to watch her so carefully? Wasn't she healthy?"

"Physically, yes. A perfect flower."

"Only physically?"

"That, my friend, is what I do not know. To all outward appearances she has until lately lived her little life, secluded but happy, untouched by care. Then along comes this footprint abomination, making my life a trial. The long and short of it" —his voice sank to a whisper—"there is insanity in her family. Her grandfather died in a private asylum. He, too, had footprint delusions!"

"There is insanity in the family!" Garth was endeavoring to keep his face immobile, and took a quick sip from his glass.

"Alas, yes. Her mother's father——"

A piercing shriek filled the air and arrested the words on Mr. Drummond's lips. Both men leaped to their feet and dashed out into the living-room. The two maids and Mrs. Andrews, wide-eyed and disheveled, were scurrying at top speed into the bedroom of Louise Greenwood. Benson Drummond and the detective got there at the same time, and all piled into the room. The girl was lying on the floor near the bed, unconscious. Her face was ashen, even under the rosy glow from a silk-shaded lamp on the dressing-table. Squatting beside her, rocking back and forth, was the half-witted youth, cradling his doll and staring vacantly at the toe of Louise's pink slipper.

"Hell's fire!" muttered Garth, pushing forward. He bent over the girl's prone form, slipped his arm about her and lifted her very tenderly to the bed. The warmth and softness of her body caused him to sigh sharply. He involuntarily tightened his arms about her before laying her on the lacy coverlet. By this time the servants, Mrs. Andrews and Mr. Drummond had all swarmed about the bed, and the air was filled with exclamations and the sound of weeping. Through it all the boy sat on the floor, unmoved, impassive, in a world of his own.

Garth straightened up from a lingering survey of Louise's face, and as he did so looked up at the ceiling. A spasm of astonishment crossed his face, but he said nothing. He had seen a miracle.

The ceiling was covered with footprints traveling around in a wide circle, and every single print was of the right foot!

CHAPTER FOUR

PANDEMONIUM had broken out in the bedroom, and Garth held up his hand.

"Never mind anything now but Miss Louise. Get her feeling better before you do another thing. Quick, now!" He addressed the two cowering domestics, who straightway fled.

It was the intention of Garth to empty the room as quickly as possible. Fortunately, no one else had looked at the ceiling; of all those who had been in the room he alone knew that it was marked with the footprints of what he was beginning to call in his mind the "damned thing."

"I would suggest," he said quietly, "that we carry Miss Greenwood into the library. Something has disturbed her here; when she returns to consciousness she will feel better if she is in a different room."

He stepped forward as if to lift her in his arms when Drummond interfered.

"I will do all the carrying that is to be done here, Mr. Garth," he said sharply.

"By all means," agreed the detective, reddening.

He stood aside while the gray-haired uncle lifted the lovely girl in his arms. Awkwardly enough he carried her down the

hallway to a couch in the library where he had been conversing with the detective.

"Go with them," whispered the detective authoritatively into the ear of old Mrs. Andrews. The aged woman gave him a bewildered look and then glanced at her half-witted boy, still crooning to his doll.

"Leave him here," said Garth, still in a whisper.

Mrs. Andrews hesitated only for a moment. Her sharp eyes seemed to study the detective and appraise him. Whatever she saw there satisfied her. Without another word she turned and walked hurriedly out of the room.

Left alone with the half-witted boy, Garth's first move was to turn his eyes again to the ceiling. There they were—that appalling circle of human footprints—every one a right-foot print, clearly printed on the ceiling paper in a faded red color, like pale blood. It was as if some uncanny creature with the power to walk upside-down had hopped in a wide circle on one foot around the ceiling—hopped on a foot that was wet with some red and ghastly fluid.

What could be the meaning of this incredible mystery! Into what lurid plot had he been dragged at the very moment when he, in his loneliness, had meant to smoke a peaceful pipe and go to bed? Such things couldn't be true! The whole idea was monstrous. The print on the mudguard of the car—and then the wax foot in the girl's pocket. The girl! She was worth it all. Somehow Garth trusted her. He liked her eyes—she——

Even in her distress, even in the midst of all this mystery, he fancied to himself there was something in her that might make him forget his loneliness.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed the half-witted boy.

Garth jumped, thoroughly startled.

"What's the matter? What are you laughing at?" he asked, looking full into the boy's queer face.

"Somebody's been walking upside-down. That ain't right," said the boy with a hideous leer.

"You mean——" began Garth.

The boy pointed upward with a white forefinger, long and thin.

"Them!" he said. "I won't look at 'em again. I've seen 'em before. They make me—*afraid!*"

Garth looked from the grim footprints on the ceiling to the face of the boy in great perplexity. His mind seemed stalled like an engine. It was stiflingly hot in the room; he gave a curse and opened the window. The thing was getting on his nerves. The sound of the voice of Louise recalled him to himself, and turning he saw that the half-wit had slipped away.

With a farewell glance at the footprints on the ceiling, he turned and walked down the corridor. When he reached the library he saw that Louise was conscious again. She was sitting, propped upright, against pillows on the couch. Her uncle was standing near, his good-looking face thoroughly worried. Mrs. Andrews was on her knees beside her charge, weeping piteously. The maids and the half-witted boy were not there.

At the sight of the detective Louise cried out:

"Oh, Mr. Garth. I'm so glad you're still here. You must help me—I feel as if I am losing my mind!"

"What has happened?" asked Garth quietly. "But before you tell me, why not wait and get thoroughly quiet?"

"I can never be quiet until whatever the thing is that pursues me is driven out of this house!" cried Louise on the verge of hysteria. "I shall go mad—I know I shall go mad!"

Drummond exchanged a pitiful and significant glance with the detective. Plainly he was thinking of the girl's grandfather who had died in an asylum.

Garth drew up a chair and seated himself beside Louise.

"Then tell me what happened," he suggested. "It may ease your mind just to tell it."

She flashed him a grateful glance from eyes which thrilled him whenever they encountered his own.

"I had got into bed," began Louise, her voice trembling, "and though I was still very

nervous I was so reassured by your being here that I felt sure I would be able to compose myself and later to go to sleep. But as I lay there I began to fancy that I heard those pattering sounds—like bare feet. Just to be as brave as I could I had turned off the light, but on hearing those sounds I grew frightened again and turned on the light. There is a button close to my bed. I lay back and looked up at the ceiling and then——"

She began to laugh hysterically, and the sound of it filled Garth with the greatest pity he had ever known for a human being.

"And then——" he prompted gently.

"There were footprints all over the ceiling!" she cried. "I know you won't believe me, but there were—I saw them, I tell you, I saw them!"

Drummond clapped his hands together impulsively.

"You imagined that you saw them, Louise," he said. "Such things couldn't be."

"Did you look at the ceiling, by any chance?" demanded Garth, angry at the man's tone.

"I did!" said Drummond stoutly. "I did look at the ceiling when we all went in there. And there were no footprints on the ceiling. Of course there weren't."

"You are mistaken. I think you just imagine you looked at the ceiling," retorted Garth. "I looked at the ceiling and I——"

"So did I," interrupted old Mrs. Andrews.

"And what did you see?" asked Garth.

"I saw the footprints," sobbed the old woman.

"So did I," said Garth.

Drummond threw out his hands in a gesture of thorough exasperation.

"You are all like a lot of lunatics!" he cried. "The idea of saying such things! It couldn't be true. I want to tell you, Mr. Detective, that I do know what I am talking about. I *did* look at that ceiling—and there were no footprints, or anything else, on it. This thing must be infectious."

"The argument is very easily settled," said Garth evenly. "I am not disposed to make light of what Miss Greenwood says she saw. She is a sensible, normal woman and she has seen a very terrifying thing. I, for one, know that she is telling the truth, because I saw the same thing. But in order to settle the dispute let's look at the ceiling again."

"There's no reason why we should do any such thing," protested Drummond vigorously. "It's nonsense to even suppose that a thing such as that could happen."

"Do you object to looking again?" demanded Garth.

"Why should I, Mr. Garth—except that it is all nonsense."

"The room is only a few steps down the hall. Come with me and I'll show them to you!"

Drummond hesitated a moment, then gave in.

"All right," he said. "Anything to oblige you, Mr. Garth."

The two of them walked down the corridor without a word. As they came to the door Garth said a strange thing.

"I should like to go in first, Mr. Drummond, if you please?" he suggested.

"Why not?" asked Drummond, plainly surprised.

Confidently Garth stepped into the room and looked up at the ceiling.

Then he received the greatest shock of his career.

The ceiling was bare. There was not the slightest trace of even one footprint left upon it.

CHAPTER FIVE

"WHO'S looney now?" asked Drummond insolently.

Garth did not reply.

His mind was busy—bitterly busy—with the ripening intention of solving this mystery at all hazards and at all costs. He realized now that he was fighting no ordinary criminal. For by the very token of those disappearing footprints he knew that he was on the trail of a crime and that behind the crime was a scheming intelligence so crafty, so malignant, so daring, that it would take

all his skill and all his cunning to defeat it and to save Louise from——

He dared not take Drummond or any one else into his counsel. This mysterious apartment was not the place for expressing opinions or revealing his theories.

"Mr. Drummond," said Garth, "I am afraid you win. At the same time there is a mystery here. I am not a fool. Neither is your niece. Something is at work here. Do you want me to solve it or not?"

"I do," said Drummond seriously. "Only I am afraid you detectives are all alike. You want to solve a mystery. I do not think there is any mystery here!"

"But surely, Mr. Drummond——"

"No mystery at all," insisted Drummond, lowering his voice and glancing over his shoulder down the hallway. "I am afraid the mystery is all in the mind of my unfortunate niece. Her grandfather was mad. And now——"

Tears were in his eyes.

Garth could not disregard that theory. Lunatics did just such things, he well knew. Yet he could not bring himself to believe such a horrible thing against the lovely girl whose eyes even now warmed his heart. Even with the evidence of the wax foot he had found in her pocket fresh in his memory he could not believe it.

"But old Mrs. Andrews saw the footprints, too," he reminded Drummond.

"She says that she did. But did she? She has a half-witted son who gives me the creeps. Where did he get his insanity if not from his mother? I think the old woman is crazy, too!"

"Do you think I am?" demanded Garth.

"I never trusted a detective in my life," said Drummond coldly.

The insult brought a red flush to Garth's cheeks. His hands clenched into balled fists. Then he smiled, but if Drummond had known Garth he would have remembered that smile.

"Very well, Mr. Drummond," said Garth quietly. "Do you wish me to withdraw from this case?"

"I would like to summon an alienist," said Drummond.

Garth passed him without a word and returned to the library.

"Miss Greenwood," he said earnestly, "I have come to the conclusion that you are entirely correct in all that you have told us. You have seen the very things you have described; I have seen them, too. I would advise you to come with me; I have friends who would willingly open their homes to you and where I can promise you nothing will disturb you!"

"She shall not leave this house!" thundered Drummond, who had followed Garth swiftly into the library.

"Why not?" cried Garth.

"You know why not!" shouted Drummond, rapidly losing his temper. "I am this young woman's guardian and I will not permit it!"

"How old are you, Miss Greenwood?" asked Garth tensely.

"I am twenty-one, Mr. Garth."

"Then you are of age, your own mistress and you can do whatever you please. Your uncle has not the slightest authority over you. I tell you to come with me; he tells you to stay. You will have to decide!"

Bewildered, Louise looked from the angry face of her uncle into the calm eyes of the detective, whom she had met for the first time that night. Only for an instant she hesitated. Then she rose from the couch, breathing deeply, proud and capable.

"I shall take your advice, Mr. Garth," she said. "I shall go with you!"

CHAPTER SIX

OLD Mrs. Andrews went with them. Drummond blustered and swore, but Garth knew how to dominate even such an excitable and outraged character as Drummond. Before they had departed the uncle was reconciled. He was only looking out for the best interests of his niece, and it was a great deal to expect him to approve her leaving, in the early hours of the morning, with a stranger.

"Where are you taking her?" asked

Drummond when the summoned taxi was at the door of the apartment-house.

"To the home of Mrs. Whitfield, the novelist, 244 Riverside Drive, Apartment One-B," replied Garth evenly. "Mrs. Whitfield is one of my good friends. She has based one or two of her novels on my humble exploits. She will welcome your niece."

"Very well, then," acceded Drummond with more grace than he had hitherto shown. "When am I to see my niece again?"

"She will return here when this mystery is cleared up," replied Garth.

"And when"—Drummond was sneering—"and when will that be, may I ask?"

"No man can tell that," replied Garth, "but I shall be back here at ten o'clock tomorrow morning."

"What for, in God's name, Mr. Garth?"

"To solve the mystery, Mr. Drummond. Good-night!"

As Garth had predicted, the gray-haired and majestic Mrs. Whitfield was ready with a welcome for the distraught young Louise and her old nurse when the party reached their door considerably after two o'clock in the morning. Garth pressed the hand of Louise in parting and promised her that all would be well. Her parting glance lingered with him on the way home. In fact, he remembered it for the rest of his life.

Garth did not sleep that night. His mind was too filled with the mystery of the affair. Step by step he reviewed the incidents. He had brought with him the wax model of the foot which he had found in the pocket of Louise. This he studied with the most intent curiosity. After a while he put it aside, put a fresh log on the fire and gave himself up to sheer meditation.

Over and over in his mind he recited the details of what had happened from the moment old Mrs. Andrews entered his study. At each successive incident he paused, waiting to discover if it was not freighted with some significance. It was dawn before he found the one clue which he had wished for. It came at the memory of what had seemed, at the time, to be a most trivial detail.

"Of course!" he muttered with chagrin. "What a fool I was not to notice it!"

With a bound he reached a bookcase and began hunting for a volume at which he had not looked in many years. A few minutes' search found him exactly what he wished to know. He chuckled with a kind of subdued hilarity. He was getting somewhere; all sorts of clues were opening up.

For the next three hours Garth was an exceedingly busy man. He went to a certain store and had a long talk with its proprietor. What he learned there brought a smile of approaching triumph to his lips. From there he sought out a man in overalls with whom he had a brief conversation and took down an address. He called on a firm of real-estate agents and from the manager gleaned some facts of a highly confidential nature. Immediately he went into a telephone booth and called up two men in Wall Street, who asked him to call again in five minutes. One after the other he called them again in the time specified, and by that time his smile was almost a grin.

There remained but one more call for him to make, and this was to a firm of decorators not far from the house on West End Avenue where Louise Greenwood had been tortured by such abominable and evasive mysteries.

This last Garth regarded as conclusive. The case was clear. With that one clue to work on he had followed the trail through a winding maze, but it led resolutely and unmistakably back to one source.

At last he was able to unravel the mystery of the footprints on the ceiling.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRECISELY at ten o'clock, as he had promised, Garth rang the doorbell at the apartment of Benson Drummond, and it was Drummond himself who opened the door.

"So!" he said not very politely. "You did come back. Well, I hope you have come back to apologize?"

"I have," replied Garth with a forgiving

smile. "I have come back to apologize for my great stupidity. I should have seen through this thing at once. I have been a great ass, Mr. Drummond. But now I'm ready to explain all the mystery!"

"Indeed!"

"Indeed. Yes, sir. I have not much time, so I would suggest that we get down to business. Let us go to the room of your niece at once!"

"What for?"

"I want to show you those footprints on the ceiling."

"There aren't any footprints on the ceiling."

"Yes, yes, there are, Mr. Drummond."

"I don't believe it."

"I don't ask you to. I ask you to let me show them to you."

"Oh, very well, then."

They spoke no more until they both stood in the pretty little bedroom where Louise Greenwood had dreamed the sweet dreams of girlhood until this terrible mystery had made them all nightmares and hours of cowering awakeness.

"I ask you to look at the ceiling, Mr. Drummond."

"I am looking at it, Garth. And there's no footprints on it, as you very well know."

A cold wind, the remnant of the storm of the preceding night, struck them chilly through the open windows. Garth pulled down the window and turned on the heat.

"Now let's watch the ceiling," he proposed.

"And make fools of ourselves? Not me! I've played with this thing long enough, Mr. Garth—altogether too long, in fact. I've got to get down to my business."

"How is your business?" asked Garth casually.

"What does that matter to you?"

"Isn't it a fact that you are trembling on the verge of bankruptcy—and, perhaps, discovery?"

Drummond grew ghastly pale.

"What do you mean?" he growled.

"Just what I said. Aren't you?"

"You impertinent, damned scoundrel, I'll——"

"Easy, Mr. Drummond. It is the business of a detective to know everything. I know your business is in a bad way. You've been a fool to let it get that way, but you have. And you've done something you ought not to have done, Mr. Drummond. You've borrowed your ward's money, for which you were the trustee, to try to save your business, and that went, too. It's a bad mess, Mr. Drummond."

"I'll break your damned——"

"Look!" cried Garth suddenly.

Drummond looked up at the ceiling. The blood-red footprints were there again—a wide and lurid circle of footprints over their heads.

"Do you see them, or don't you?" snarled Garth.

Before Drummond could reply Garth had sprung upon him. Like lightning a pair of handcuffs were on the man's wrists and Garth had flung him backward upon the bed.

"Now, you damned old thief and hypocrite," said Garth sternly, "lie there and look at the footprints of your own making while I tell you the facts that you already know. Your business was going to smash through your foolish speculations. I more than suspect that it was because you wanted to buy diamonds and furs for a dancer at the Summer Garden that you plunged so recklessly. A business man ought to keep away from that sort of thing, Drummond—especially the guardian of a good, pure girl like Louise. At all events, I know that your business is in a bad way and that you are suspected of misappropriating funds from the fortune left to Louise by her father. I got that from confidential sources in Wall Street in five minutes over the telephone this morning.

"And now I'll tell you just what you did. You sat down and realized that you were pretty well at the end of your tether. What made it worse for you was the fact that Louise was just of age and could legally claim her inheritance. You would have to render an accounting to her of the money you had used.

"Were you man enough to do that? Were you man enough to throw yourself on her mercy, tell her your plight, and offer to

work for the rest of your life to make a restitution? She would have forgiven you. She is just that kind of a girl. But you were too big a coward to play a man's part, even after you had acted like a crook. No! You sat down and contrived a villainous plot against an innocent and helpless girl. You determined to play sly and frightful little tricks on her and then accuse her of being insane. She had a history of insanity in her family, and you would play on that and crush her. She would say she saw footprints on the ceiling—and then there would be no footprints there. That would be case enough, with your tricks, to railroad her into an asylum. Your guardianship of her money would have to be continued for life—and you would get her money. You monster!

"So you decided to have this apartment redecorated. You didn't ask the real-estate agents to pay for it. You *volunteered* to pay for the job yourself; I got it from the agents this morning. You hired your own paperhanger. I talked with him this morning. He tells me you insisted on him showing you the rolls of paper which were to go on the ceiling, and that they remained in your possession for two nights; that you delayed the job for two days, for what reason he did not know.

"But I know. It all became very clear to me when I remembered last night that the footprints did not disappear until I opened the window. They were affected by heat and cold. That gave me the clue. It all became clear and simple after that. Of course, I have known of magic inks since I was a kid. We used to write love-notes to the girls with them. Mix up a few chemicals and you have a colorless liquid. Write with that liquid and the paper remains blank. But heat the paper and the writing plainly comes out—to disappear again as soon as the paper is cold.

"That is what you did. You mixed a mess of those chemicals. I talked with the druggist up the street—the man you bought the chemicals from. He remembered the transaction perfectly; he couldn't understand why you wanted such large quantities of chemicals. And then you dipped your wax foot in the ink and printed the footprints.

"Oh, you were clever. You knew what to do. You knew Louise never turned the heat on in her bedroom—a sensible, physical-culture girl. Therefore your footprints were safe until you chose to turn on the heat, unknown to her, and your magic footprints appeared.

"You made the print on the mudguard of the car. You put the foot in her pocket. You did everything you could—probably pattering up and down in the halls in your bare feet, in your cunning way, to terrify that girl and make her appear insane. But it didn't work.

"Drummond, you are under arrest!"

But Louise insisted that Garth let him go. She wept over her rascally guardian, and consented to lose the money he had stolen from her if he would leave the country.

He is now in Australia, and writes to Louise that some day soon he will pay her back. As far as such a man can repent he has repented, but such men can't go very far.

As for Garth, his loneliness is at an end. He has a wife whose name is Louise, and they love each other very, very much.

As Per Schedule

By J. B. WARRENTON

RED LEARY, the burglar, snapped off his flashlight and listened intently. Above the droning of the electric drill a sound had reached his ears. The creaking of a doorknob, and the ruddy face of Patrolman Carney flattened against the heavy glass panel of the front door, aroused him to the fact that he had been discovered.

The hour was past midnight—long past the business hours of the Globe Loan Company—and Red was not a member of the money lending syndicate with the spherical name, nor an employee, nor had he any business there whatsoever. He muttered a strangled oath and snapped off the power feeding the drill.

Before the massive safe where Red had been working lay a sinister, blue-nosed automatic revolver on the floor. He seized it, his slitted eyes never leaving the visage framed in the glass door panel.

"Carney!" he growled in his throat. "I'll get him if he don't double-bank me! H—!" His eyes were reptile green. His thick lips were curled into a wolfish snarl. "Th' blasted bull's put one over on me! I'm trapped."

Rightly spoken, Red Leary. Officer Carney had noted the cracksman's unceremonious entry and sent in a call for the reserves. In less time than it takes to tell it the little red brick building was surrounded with grim-faced policemen armed to the teeth.

Did the red-headed yegg surrender when called on in the name of the law? He did not! His reply to the official demand was a well-directed bullet from his wicked little revolver. It found its mark—found it in the heart of Policeman Carney. He fell with a groan.

Another policeman answered the long roll before Red Leary was captured. The crook, too, was the recipient of several bullets. But he lived to be convicted by twelve men good and true, and leered as a venerable judge monotonously sentenced him to die in the chair, the execution to take place between the hours of midnight and daylight of the morning of August 23d.

The prison in which the murderous yegg was confined had for the past two years been a source of much discussion in the Legislature. The somber old building, although formidable-looking enough, lacked the stability of a modern jail. It was old. Built half a century before. Old-fashion flagstones still paved the floors of the lower cells and corridors. But for all that very few prisoners had escaped. "A paper jail," sneeringly commented some of the hard-boiled yeggs who had crushed-out at various times. "More ways than the door to make a getaway."

Red had not been long in jail when a fire broke out in the west wing. Storerooms, washrooms, and the grim death house was in that wing.

Red, who in a few more days would be removed from the cell which he then occupied to the death cell, where he would be under vigilant guard until he entered the room from which there was no return on this earth, laughed gleefully when he learned of the damage to the chair.

"Make it snappy, bo," was the order received by a "lifer" three cells away. The message was delivered via the cockroach service—a service that was very valuable to the long-termed inmates; a living service of communication between prisoners who were not allowed verbal discourse. Meaning: the old jail was infested with

large cockroaches, which invaded the cells. These insects were captured by the prisoners who made messengers of them.

On the blank margin of a newspaper or magazine a brief note is scribbled—sometimes in criminal code, lest the dumb carrier should "jump the rails" and the concise communication fall into the hands of the guards. Then by means of a splinter of wood or pin it is attached to the back of the repulsive brown bug, who is placed carefully on a bar overhead, outside the cells, which runs the length of the tier.

The bar is the principal means, with a lever on one end, of securing all cells on that tier at one single throw.

Mr. Bug is headed towards the cell in which the inmate is waiting, and when it comes in sight it is captured, relieved of the clandestine epistle, then set free. Prisoners never destroy the useful insects.

The time set for Red's execution was but forty-eight hours or so away, and the murderous yegg had not been removed to the death cell. The damage there, caused by the fire, had not been repaired.

The usual guard called the death watch in such cases was posted over the cell in which he still was confined.

Red Leary was in a jovial mood that night, and after "lights out" he shed his outer habiliments and stretched his huge body on the iron cot. Early that evening, while the guard's attention was drawn to a fight between two inmates returning from the shops—a plant—Red intercepted a cockroach messenger bearing the final word.

"What's the matter, Leary?" questioned the guard, pushing back his chair and peering between the bars. A low moan had come from within. He centered his flashlight on the huddled form on the cot.

The moan was repeated. The body squirmed as though in mortal agony. "I'm dying! I'm bleeding to death," was the startling answer.

The guard, a new one, lost his head, so to speak. The prisoner had attempted suicide under his very eyes. For a fleeting moment he could see his job vanishing in thin air. And of course, as always in cases of lack of training and practical experience, the flustered guard did the wrong thing.

Without calling for aid, which is a prison rule rigidly applied when dealing with men of Red Leary's type, the rattled guard rushed to the lever and released the bar, then unlocked the murderer's cell and sprang inside.

When the unfortunate prison officer leaned over the seemingly dying yegg two hairy arms shot up like giant springs uncoiled. Then less than three minutes later a dead guard was covered up on the cell cot, and Red Leary and a "lifer" named Fox were lowering themselves through an aperture in the floor three cells away.

After carefully replacing a square piece of flagging over the hole, the two worthies found themselves in inky darkness. They were on their knees, and the stench of sewer gas assailed their nostrils.

"Sure yer know de way?" hissed the red-headed yegg.

"Sure," came back the reply from the "lifer." "Keep close to my feet."

Red grunted. The journey began.

The underground warren, where the two prisoners were on their knees and crawling towards an opening which terminated some fifty yards south, was a sewer that had long been out of service. In former days it was the receptacle for slops from the jail. It emptied under a pier outside the prison wall, a sluggish-surfaced canal, drinking in the filthy waste.

Red Leary cursed at the darkness. Monster rats scurried and squeaked as the prisoners crawled through the putrid ooze, coughing and struggling in their efforts to reach the end and breathe pure air again.

But "well-laid plans of mice and men" went astray with the men. The time-worn subterranean, built of rough stone and mortar, weakened by the weight of the more than three hundred pounds of bone and flesh, caved in with a roar when possible liberty was but a scant fifty feet away.

Stunned, nearly smothered by the shower of earth, lime and segments of stone, Red and his ally lay prone amidst the débris.

The red-headed cracksman was the first to recover his faculties and first to find his

voice. He sputtered all the profane oaths known to mankind upon the head of the "lifer," whom he blamed for the catastrophe.

In that mucky warren a tragedy had taken place. A low moan came out of the darkness, and a weak voice cried out in appeal:

"Leary! For God's sake help me!"

The cracksman rubbed the filth from his face and snarled:

"What th' devil's th' matter wid youse? Dig out before we croak."

The moan that responded was fainter now, and the voice was several degrees weaker.

"My chest is busted," came again the voice from the gloom. "Help me—Red! Help—me! I'm—choking——"

A short gasp and a horrible rattle was the end. The "lifer" had gone to stand trial before a greater tribunal.

Unmoved by the death of his companion, for sorrow was unknown in his murderous heart, Red Leary was fully alive to the fact that he, too, would be food for the army of rodents that swarmed the foul channel unless he quickly found a way out.

Frantically he tore at the barricade confronting him. The air was stifling. The sharp rough stones rent and tore the flesh from his huge hands. His eyeballs burned in their sockets like embers of livid flame; his head throbbed and drummed, and on his knees he swayed like a reed in the wind. He uttered a curse and lurched sideways. His massive body crashed through the wall at his side and he sank in a panting heap as a breath of dank air enveloped his bursting head.

After several minutes, in which time Red had filled his clogged lungs with the now stenchless current of air, he raised his body to a sitting position and tried to pierce the inky darkness with his burning eyes. No use. The black mantle was impenetrative.

His bleeding hands swept his surroundings. Where he sat was a floor of damp earth, and above was hard, ragged stone.

"Dey must be another way out through here," he muttered thickly. "Dis leads to de canal, too, maybe. It's a sure bet I can't get through dat cave-in, so I must take a chance with dis hole."

Red started on his underground journey again.

His progress was slow and wearisome. All thoughts of time and direction were lost to the escaping yegg.

But fatigue of body was victor over his wild craving for possible liberty. He rested. He dozed. He screamed aloud as the rats, bold in their advances by the virtue of their superior numbers and the seeming helplessness of their intended victim, scurried around him and bit at his face and lacerated hands.

For hours Red repulsed their unwavering attack, till at last he was obliged to abandon all thoughts of rest and seek safety in surging ahead.

Spurred by the rodent enemy, Red crawled painfully on. Thirst and hunger were the only time-clock of the fleeting hours since he murdered the guard and broke for liberty. As his progress grew more painful he wished himself back in the jail again, where at least there would be a cot to rest on and no cannibalistic rats nibbling at his heels.

The red-headed cracksman was whining now, as his every move wrung from his parched lips a cry of pain. An unhealthy thirst, a feverish burning in his temples, aroused him to the fact that he must escape from the germ-reeking warren. Then his last hope was shattered by another obstruction. This time his groping hands before him flattened against a solid, cold wall!

"God!" he gasped. "Where am I?"

But his query remained unanswered. He flew into a spasmodic fit of rage and fear, pounding the wall with his swollen fists.

The air was becoming oppressive and stagnant again. The rodent menace, who were now numbered near the hundred, were pressing him close and evidently massing for a final attack.

Red Leary, super-cracksman of the underworld, double murderer of sworn duty martyrs, was trapped by the scavenger host. Fronting him was a solid wall of stone. To the right and left was a wall of earth and brick. In seeking liberty he had found his

tomb. The rats were now swarming all over him. He screamed as he tore them from his neck and face, crushing their bodies in his huge hands, hurling them from him as they squeaked in their death throes. Then, in one last mighty effort to ward off the seemingly inevitable, the trapped murderer, unmindful of the fact that the roof, only a foot or so above, was like the other three walls, heaved his massive shoulders upwards.

A crash followed the impact. A shower of dirt, mortar and other débris rained over his bare head and shoulders. A sweeping current of air rushed through the opening as his body shot upwards, the army of attacking rodents taking fright at the turn of affairs and scurrying off.

Red Leary, breathing deeply of the air in the room where he found a refuge from the filthy warren and its inhabitants, was puzzled at the gloom surrounding him. He was sure that he was in a room of some sort, although not a tiny gleam of light was visible.

The air, except that seeping from the hole from which he had so recently emerged, was soft and warm. For several seconds he stood blinking and striving to reason out where he might be. All sense of direction had been lost in the underground struggle for life and freedom. He thrilled with the thought that outside the grim prison there were several unoccupied storehouses, where in prior days cotton and other merchandise had been stored, the mills in the town receiving their supply via the barges in the canal, which were now supplanted by the encroaching railroad.

"Dat's were I am," Red muttered thickly. "Gee, dis is luck! Dis must be de cellar. I'll beat 'em yet, d—— 'em! I must find a way——"

He took a step forward, reeled and clutched the empty air wildly.

"God, but my bean's spinnin'," he cried hoarsely, falling to his knees to recover his equilibrium. "Dat hole near croaked me."

Another attempt was as futile as before. His knees bent beneath the weight of his ponderous body as he swayed from side to side. His eyelids, like curtains of lead, dropped heavily over his bloodshot eyes. Away, safe from the terrors of the ancient sewer from which he escaped, sleep was in the ascendant and, struggle as he might, Red Leary was fast yielding to nature's narcotic. He pinched his numb flesh and rubbed his closed eyes feebly. But nature brooked no denial, and the murderous cracksman stumbled forward, half turned in an attempt to recover himself, then slumped down onto an object and slept.

The murder of the prison guard and the escape were discovered less than twenty minutes later. The alarm was broadcasted without, and a thorough combing had been instituted within the prison. The hour was nearly midday when a prison official found the means of Leary and the "lifer's" attempted getaway. A search of the unused sewer revealed the rat-gnawed body of Red's unfortunate companion. The opening where the cracksman had crashed through, after the cave-in which killed the "lifer," was filled up with fallen débris when the searchers looked around for the means by which Red escaped.

Baffled for the time, they returned to the hunt. All the remainder of the day and late into the night the search outside and within the jail was resumed with the same result. No trace.

At twelve o'clock the invited witnesses and gentlemen of the press gathered in the Warden's office. It was the time set for the putting to death in the electric chair of one William, alias Red, Leary. The chaplain was also at hand to comfort, if he could, the condemned man in his last hours on earth.

"Gentlemen," addressed the warden, closing the cover of his heavy gold watch with a vicious snap, "I cannot assure you that the execution will take place between the hours as ordered by the court. It is now a few minutes after two o'clock. In another hour and a half the dawn of August 23d will be breaking. I beg of you to make yourselves as comfortable as possible, as there is still hope that the fugitive might be captured alive. The fire that we had a short time ago, as you gentlemen of the press are

aware, mussed up the death house. But by putting on an extra force of workmen everything is ready, except some little minor repairs which can be done later. I am going to have another look around, and you, Sullivan"—turning to a uniformed officer sitting at a desk—"call me at once if you receive any news."

The warden, his eyes like glints of cold steel, his firm mouth set in grim lines, an hour or so later paced the corridor before the death house. Only the usual sounds broke the stillness of the somber prison. The stentorian snoring, grunting, coughing and the incoherent muttering of the inmates was heard as they slept. Then there was the soft tread of the night guards; a gleam of light from their flashlights; keys rattling, and now and then the squeak of a rat.

To all of these the warden was indifferent. In another half-hour the time for the execution of Red Leary would have expired. He looked at his watch as he stopped before the little green door. Then he snapped it shut again and muttered angrily. Then his head went up with a jerk. He listened intently for an instant, a puzzled pucker between his shaggy eyebrows as he unlocked and entered the death house.

Five minutes later the warden stood outside the little green door again. He did not lock it, nor did he shut it. Within the lights burned brightly. He beckoned a guard who was passing by, who touched his cap and stood at attention.

"Doyle," he ordered in a firm voice, a tinge of elation creeping into his tone as he went on, "deliver my compliments to the chaplain, the gentlemen of the press and the other witnesses, and tell them they may proceed to the death house. Also tell Foster, the electrician, to come to me at once. By order of the superior court, William Leary is to die in the electric chair in this prison between the hours of midnight and daybreak on the morning of the twenty-third of August."

The warden cleared his throat as the guard stared at him with mouth agape. Then he resumed in the same clear tone:

"Tell them that there will be no march to the death house, and that the condemned man awaits them *in the chair,* to die as per schedule!"

When the murderous yegg broke through the floor of what he thought was an empty storehouse he had entered the death house. And when fatigue overwhelmed him he fell into the death chair. And there he was, sound asleep, when found, ready for his execution.

DETECTIVES GRAB BANK BURGLARS

A SWARM of detectives invaded the basement of the Solitario Bank at 241 East Twenty-ninth street recently and arrested four men who had started to bore upwards through the floor of the bank office, where $40,000 in currency was in a safe.

The detectives had been watching the bank from neighboring sidewalks, doorways and windows. When they saw four men make their way to the rear of the building the detectives gradually closed in on them. After the four had forced their way through a basement door and started work on the ceiling the detectives made a sudden rush.

Two men were caught by Detectives Schaus and Daly of the safe and loft squad. Detectives McKeon and Levine caught another and a fourth was arrested by policemen who had been stationed in the rear of the bank.

The burglary had been planned for several days, according to Detectives Schaus and Daly. They kept the gang under surveillance two days while burglar tools were deposited at handy places. Learning the exact hour scheduled for the crime, they were able to arrange an elaborate trap.

The prisoners described themselves as Philip Dougherty, 20, Peter Ferrone, 24, Frank Holly, 24, and Edward Schechter.

How the Loft Thieves Work

By EDWIN A. GOEWEY

LOFT burglars are among the most resourceful of New York's outlaws, and the furs and silks stolen by them every year total millions of dollars in value.

To curb their persistent activities it has been necessary for the metropolitan police department to establish a special detail known as the Safe and Loft Squad, composed of some of the city's keenest and most experienced detectives, and they have done much to handicap the gentry specializing in loft work, exposing several unusually clever systems for theft and sending many of the offenders away for long periods.

But New York is not the only place which has suffered from the depredations of the loft thieves. All large cities sustain severe losses annually from the operations of this particular class of criminal.

One of the cleverest operatives against the loft burglars of the metropolis is a short, stocky, two-fisted detective, with uncertain reddish hair, who may be anywhere between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age, and to whom we shall refer as "Pinky" Martin, even if it isn't his correct name. He has specialized in this line of crookedness, and no man is more feared by those who center their efforts on stealing silks and furs. This article is based upon his observations and adventures, and contains much which should benefit those who would protect their property from the class who labor while most honest persons sleep.

The scene was the center of Manhattan's great silk district, signs on every side proclaiming the fabric was on sale in wholesale and retail quantities.

In the crowd which pushed and jostled through one of the narrowest thoroughfares of the quarter walked a young woman perhaps nineteen years of age, sure of step, confident of carriage, who glanced about as if in search of a particular number. She was of striking appearance, mascara, carmine and rouge having been applied deftly to accentuate her natural good looks, her curled bobbed hair peeped out pleasingly from beneath a natty hat and her new and not inexpensive clothing indicated a taste for vivid color.

Obviously well satisfied with her personal appearance, she returned none of the bold looks flashed upon her, but moved forward with business-like stride until she reached No. 36. Entering the building, she glanced at the directory, noted that the Highart Silk Company was located on the fifth floor, and proceeded there by elevator. With experienced eyes she read the lettering on the door, saw that H. Hermans was listed as manager, and asked to see him as soon as she reached the information desk.

It chanced that Mr. Hermans was inside the railing, and having an eye for beauty, particularly the kind that could look him straight in the eye without the quiver of a lash, he beckoned the young woman to enter and placed a chair for her near his desk.

"What can I do for you?" he queried with a smile.

"My name is Newton, Miss Georgette Newton," replied the newcomer. "I've just come from Chicago, and am seeking a position in New York. I was employed in silk houses out there and sometimes handled wholesale customers. I was sent here by Miss Arnold, who used to be with Kohler & Company before she married."

Mr. Hermans was well acquainted with Kohler & Company, a persistent rival, but failed to recall Miss Arnold. However, it did not matter. The Chicago applicant was

pleasing to the eye—the Hermans eye—and there was an opening in the office because of the sudden flitting of the girl who had officiated at the information window.

Following a few questions which proved the applicant knew something about the silk business, he led her to the show-rooms and soon learned that she was familiar with goods and values. Within a half-hour Miss Newton was engaged, told to report the following morning and departed, but with the understanding that she should handle the information desk when not engaged with customers. Mr. Hermans congratulated himself upon acquiring a capable addition to the staff, whose good looks might prove a winning card with customers.

Miss Newton proved to be all that the manager anticipated—and more. She attended strictly to business, soon was familiar with the stock in both the show-room and the floor above, where silks were stored in wholesale lots, handled inquiries intelligently and was well liked by her superiors and fellow employees.

Exactly two weeks after she took up her tasks with the Highart Company she was alone in the front office during the luncheon hour, the dullest period of the day in the silk trade. After waiting a few moments to be sure that none of the other employees would return for something forgotten, she took a bolt of brilliant red silk from a shelf and carried it to a front window, where she examined it intently, turning it over many times. Then she replaced the silk and took her place inside the information booth.

A few minutes later a young man, a trifle "over-dressed" and carrying a sample case, entered the office, glanced sharply about and then walked to the opening behind which Miss Newton sat.

"Beg pardon," he said. "Is everybody out?"

"It's all right, Jimmy," she answered, grasping his hand and squeezing it eagerly. "Glad you got my signal. You've got to work fast, though. Somebody's liable to come back any time. The inside door to the upstairs stock-loft is right around those shelves. Get that first. I'll cough if anybody comes in."

Placing his sample case on a nearby counter, the young man hastened to the door indicated, took a wax impression of the larger lock and examined carefully the smaller one. Then he slipped to the doors leading from the offices into the hallway and repeated the performance, following which he moved about the great room, looking over the burglar alarm system, the wires running from it and the switches.

"I got your letter, kid," he said, returning to the information window. "Is the stuff still here?"

"Yes, and it's the finest shipment of silk I've seen in years. There's more than $200,000 worth of the stuff upstairs being sorted now. You better work quickly, for they're going to begin shipping it early next week."

"Fair enough. I'll get the keys made right away and the gang will clean out the place to-morrow night. We know how to get the watchman. Gee, kid, I've missed you a lot since you've been doing the working girl act up in that West Side hash-house. But you've done a good job and we'll be together again soon. We ought to be able to sell the stuff in Chi, and then we can do a long stay on the Coast in style."

"That suits me, Jimmy, and I sure need the change after what I've been through in the last two weeks. When am I to blow this place?"

"Take the first train to Chicago when you leave here tomorrow night, and go to Ma Welch's and wait for me there. Leave your clothes at the boarding-house. We can get more out there. If you're around after the 'lift' some fly cop might recognize you, and you'd get the works for sure."

The sound of footsteps in the hallway brought the conversation to a sudden close, and after a hasty clasp of hands the youth picked up his sample case and made his exit, just as the first of the returning clerks entered.

The following night, while the watchman sat smoking his pipe just inside the locked front doors, he heard a sound, apparently from the rear of the hallway, and, going to investigate, found himself looking into the muzzle of an automatic and a pair of steely,

gimlet-like eyes, shining from beneath the peak of a cap pulled low.

Instantly his hands went up and the intruder relieved him of a pistol reposing in his coat pocket, after which he warned him in short, sharp sentences that if he failed to obey orders he would kill him. Almost in tears the guard begged the other not to hurt him, and promised to follow instructions to the letter. He was directed to resume his place at the door, and he did so, with the armed man holding a post a few feet distant in the shadows. There they waited until a youth, apparently the worse for liquor, lurched against the doors, pulled off his hat and mopped his forehead with a red silk handkerchief. Instantly the armed intruder awoke to action.

"Open the door and be quick about it," he said to the watchman in a tone that brooked no delay, and the watchman obeyed. With his weapon still covering the guard the man opened the door on a crack, and said to the fellow on the outside:

"Tell Bill to drive the car here at two o'clock sharp if there's no cop on the block."

Immediately the man on the outside lurched away, but soon returned with two others, and all entered the building. After the door had been relocked, one of the men removed his coat and took his place on the stool to impersonate the watchman and at the same time act as lookout for the thieves. The three other bandits forced the watchman to accompany them to the storage-loft where, with scant ceremony, they trussed him up and gagged him. Then, with speed born of considerable experience, they selected some bolts of valuable silk, placed them in bags and carried them to a place in the shadow near the front doors.

At the appointed hour a limousine pulled up to the curb and halted with engine running, but while the thieves were in the very act of transferring the goods to the vehicle they found themselves surrounded by a dozen detectives with drawn revolvers, some rushing through the doorway of the store on the ground floor and others running from the entrances of nearby buildings.

The leader managed to overturn the officer who attempted to cover him and made a dash for the cellar in which he had hidden until he came forth to overcome the watchman. But as he reached the stairway a short, stocky man with faded red hair leaped through the doorway, floored him with a blow between the eyes, kicked aside the weapon that had fallen to the ground and sat upon him until he had snapped on the handcuffs. "I've been waiting a long time to get you with the goods, Gaston," he said cheerfully, as he pulled his prisoner to his feet. "I think you'll get quite a stretch for this job. We got your girl Peggy as she was boarding a train for Chicago."

It was a most carefully planned job, one that promised rich results, and was worked out according to schedule, but——

On the day that Peggy Gaston, "moll" companion of the youthful leader of one of the city's cleverest band of loft thieves, strolled into the silk district, "Pinky" Martin, the detective on duty there, happened to see her. Being well acquainted with both the girl's features and reputation, he yielded promptly to his curiosity and followed her. After her departure from the offices of the Highart Company, he interviewed the head of the concern and, learning that she had obtained employment there and suspecting her purpose, arranged to capture the gang.

Hermans, who received the big lesson of his life when informed of the truth by the detective, gave willing aid to a scheme to catch the girl dead to rights. The night of the day that she began her work, a dictagraph was attached to the back of the small switchboard inside the information booth and the wires were run to a private office in the quarters of a firm on the floor below where Martin, posing as an accountant, was installed. There he listened day after day, believing the girl would talk to her confederate by telephone. He had her under surveillance whenever she left the building and knew that she was communicating with none of them personally, for she played her part like the real article in the shop, on the streets and in her boarding-house. She could afford to be most circumvent for a few days in return for a haul worth many thousands of dollars, of which she would receive a generous share. It was over the dictagraph

that Martin overheard the talk between the girl and Gaston when the date for the robbery was fixed. The watchman was a detective, and he did his bit well. However, had the thieves attempted to misuse him they would have been shot by one of the officers hiding just inside of the ground floor store or another concealed in the loft from which the silk was taken. Nevertheless, the detective took long chances to obtain first-hand evidence.

"Of course we did a lot of work to land the gang," said Martin, when telling the story, "but the catch was worth it. Gaston and his bunch had gotten away with thousands of dollars' worth of silk without us being able to nail the evidence to convict them, and we took no chances of a slip-up when our big opportunity came. He and his outfit went away to learn to make little ones out of big ones or something like that, and the fair Peggy was taught plain sewing in an institution where her board and lodging were paid for by the State.

A young man, not bad looking, even though his eyes were set too closely together and his features a trifle hard, wearing a new straw hat and clothing of excellent texture, though of a cut and style not favored by the residents of Fifth and Park avenues, walked briskly through what is known as the heart of the largest "skins and furs" district of Manhattan. He carried one of those half-size leather suit cases such as are popular with typewriter and electrical apparatus repair men and city salesmen, and attracted no attention in the throng in which were many as like him in dress and impedimenta as peas.

Arriving abreast of one of the older loft buildings that had been partly improved and modernized, the young man swung briskly through the revolving door and entered an elevator in which were others bearing leather cases.

At the top floor he alighted and stepped briskly along the hallway. But he entered none of the doors with firm names lettered upon the glass. Instead, as soon as the elevator shot downward out of sight, he stepped through one marked "fire escape," and closed it without noise behind him. Inside the fireproof shaft, in which was a stairway running from the street to the roof, he tossed his straw hat into the grip, put on a cap, knotted a big handkerchief about his throat, turned up his collar, and then, with the suit case in one hand and a large pair of pliers in the other, made his way outside.

Chance observers, watching from windows of adjoining buildings, would have set him down for an electrical inspector, for he shook several wires and carefully examined their fastenings. Finally he made his way to a rather dilapidated shed on one corner of the roof that once had been used by a photographer who had a studio in the building, stepped inside and kicked shut the rickety door.

And he did not come out, though probably none who saw him enter watched sufficiently long to note this suspicious fact.

In his hiding place he made himself comfortable, lying upon his back with his grip and coat for a pillow and smoked many cigarettes. At the clang of six from a not-distant church clock he sat up, ate a huge sandwich which he drew from the suitcase, took a few swallows—but only a few—from a flask, and then went back to his cigarettes.

When it became sufficiently dark to hide his movements, he crawled into the open, seated himself with his back against the wall and waited. It was a long and tedious vigil, but he was accustomed to such delays; all a part of his "business." Slowly but surely the sounds from the street below died away until the silence was broken only at infrequent intervals by the clang of a trolley car or the honk and whir of a passing machine.

At length, when the church bell that had signaled his supper hour rang sharply twice, he became a bundle of action and nervous energy. Throwing down and stepping upon his cigarette, he pulled his cap tightly over his eyes, took a revolver from the case and dropped it into his coat pocket, pulled on a pair of rubber gloves and, with several tools in his hands, moved to the edge of the roof facing the street and lay prone. With deft fingers he located the wires leading to the

large burglar-alarm gong fastened to the outside of the structure, which was intended to ring if the front door, the entrances to the fire-escape shaft or any of the windows were forced, and quickly rendered it useless. Then, carrying his case and tools, he scurried across to the door which led to the shaft, which opened under the skilful manipulation of a jimmy and with scarcely a sound.

Next he pulled a pair of rubber "sneakers" over his shoes, and practically without sound forced his way into the main hallway, where he left his suitcase. Then, with his revolver clutched in his hand, he stole down the stairway. The venerable watchman, whom previous reconnoitering indicated spent most of his nights in a chair in the lower hall, was his prey, and the first the guardian of the premises knew of the intruder was when a slight noise caused him to shift his eyes from the street to find a pistol pointed at his head. In response to an imperative gesture the watchman followed the other into the shadows of the rear of the hallway, where a blow from the butt of the intruder's weapon dropped him, stunned, to the floor. It was but the work of a moment or two for the youth to tie and gag him, after which he relieved the veteran of his keys and weapon and moved to the front door. There he remained for a brief time until an automobile stopped at the curb and another youth, with cap drawn low, stepped into the doorway and, while pretending to light a cigarette, rapped a signal upon the glass with his ring. Immediately the one inside unfastened the door, a signal for two others to hasten from the machine.

"Be back in exactly one hour," said the leader of the enterprise, admitting the two latest arrivals, and as the door was closed and fastened the man with the cigarette strolled leisurely to the vehicle and drove away. The three intruders then dragged the partly conscious watchman with them to the third floor, where there was a halt while the leader recovered his grip. No attempt was made to force an entry, but with steel drills the thieves set to work on the fireproof door shutting them from the loft they intended to ransack, and soon cut out a large, circular piece, through which the leader crawled without touching a wire of the somewhat elaborate electrical burglar-alarm system with which the place was equipped.

The man, a clever mechanic, who had served a year with a burglar protective agency for the purpose of learning about the various contrivances with which loft buildings were equipped, went to work by the light of a flashlamp, and soon disconnected the wires attached to the door. Then it was pried open with a jimmy and the real work of the night was begun. The burglars, though young in years, knew their business and, selecting only the most valuable furs, packed them in bags which they drew from inside their shirts and carried them to a spot just inside the front door. The machine which they awaited arrived at the appointed time, the door was opened and the transfer of the loot began.

Then several things, entirely unexpected by the thieves, happened. In answer to a sharp whistle many detectives, all with guns ready for business, suddenly appeared from the shadows of the surrounding buildings, and a police machine, loaded with uniformed men, swung around the corners at either end of the block, cutting off any chance for the outlaws' car to make a getaway. There were a couple of shots from the trapped burglars, which went wild, a general free-for-all fight, following which several badly battered loft thieves were disarmed and shoved into the police automobiles.

As the clouds of battle cleared away, a short, stocky man, with somewhat faded red hair, who had rushed from the building and taken an active part in the scrimmage, addressed the man in charge of the raiding party:

"Want anything more from me tonight, inspector?"

"No, Martin. Go home and get some sleep. Be at Jefferson Market Court in the morning. You certainly put over a great night's work."

"Fine, but as I haven't eaten a thing since noon, I guess I'll head for a restaurant before hitting the hay. Good-night."

"Slippery" Archie Kennelly, loft thief ex-

traordinary, the young man who spent the afternoon on the roof and directed the looting of the place, did his work well. In fact, he and his followers came very close to getting away with $50,000 worth of furs. But——

"Pinky" Martin had been on the trail of this particular youth for days and was close behind him when he entered the building housing the fur manufacturers. Ascertaining from the elevator operator that the suspect left the car at the upper story, he made a good guess at the plot under way, and at once sought the roof of an adjoining and taller structure.

From his vantage-point he watched the crook go through his pantomime while posing as a wire repair man, saw him enter the shed on the roof and noted the cigarette smoke that drifted from the crack in the doorway.

Satisfied that he knew the objective of the youth and that he would remain "put" for some time, the detective returned to the street and located a booth telephone. It took but a few moments for him to persuade the police inspector of the district that a big job was on foot, and the latter arranged to meet the detective at a nearby point without delay. There they laid their plans for the capture, after which Martin returned to his post of observation.

When "Slippery" moved from his hideout and disconnected the alarm gong, Martin watched him from the higher roof and realized that the time for action had arrived. With a flashlight, in the front of which was a bit of red glass, he made a signal, and was reassured when he saw a tiny red glow appear for an instant in a window of a building across the street. The remainder of the night's performance worked out as the police, not the thieves, had planned.

In the foregoing cases the methods of operation followed by some of the cleverest of the loft burglars are described in detail, but there are many others, and they are altered to meet the changes made by the police, the manufacturers and the burglar protection concerns. In very many cases the thieves are neither suspected before the robberies nor apprehended afterward, and there are "fences" in all sections of the country who will pay well for such loot, without delay or questions.

"The reasons why so many crooks specialize in stealing furs and silks," said Martin, "is that there is less danger than in staging hold-ups or breaking into banks and houses, that a comparatively small haul of the better classes of goods brings big money returns and the turnovers can be made quickly and without much risk.

"There still are some veterans who take part in loft burglaries, but most of them only plan and direct operations, leaving the actual work to the younger and more active men and girls. Incidentally, the ranks of the crooks are being swelled today by young women as never in the past. I remember well the time when the better crooks would not work with women, but all that is changed. The only reason I can figure why the female of the species are turning crooks in such numbers is the present love of luxury and excitement that was unknown in previous years. And the women are the more clever in obtaining employment in places where they will be in a position to tip their male confederates when to commit theft, in tracing the burglar-alarm wiring, in obtaining wax impressions of locks, in 'borrowing' keys sufficiently long for impressions to be made outside of the office, in tampering with locks and in corrupting other employees.

"By the way, the corrupting of men employed in the buildings in which silks and furs are kept is responsible for half the thefts. Janitors, watchmen, night elevator operators, engineers, cleaners and others are persuaded to aid the thieves for a share of the 'profits' realized from the robberies. Often they act as tipsters or leave doors and windows unfastened, that the crooks may get in without difficulty.

"In the old days most of the lofts were entered by daring thieves who swung themselves across airshafts or down the sides of buildings by means of rope ladders to a place when an entry could be forced. But there is not much of that sort of thing to-

day. The police are too active, there are too many watchmen and the burglar-alarm devices installed are sufficiently tamper-proof to balk the yeggs and the common burglars.

"Today the loft thieves, as a class, pursue modern methods. Day in and day out they patrol the silk and fur districts on the lookout for 'prospects' and to receive the reports of tipsters, many of whom work steadily, though moving frequently from place to place, but who never personally take active part in burglaries. The 'scouts' sometimes make their rounds in automobiles, but usually they are afoot and most of them carry sample-cases to ward off suspicion.

"One clever fence a few years ago ran a wholesale and retail silk establishment, where he bought and sold goods just like the legitimate merchants. But his salesmen were crooks and they located promising places which pals looted at night. It was not until the 'master mind' tried to sell some of the stolen stuff in his own place that he was tripped.

"Occasionally a place is spotted which, upon investigation, proves to be so thoroughly wired that any tampering with a door or window will set off an alarm. With this in mind the thieves set to work to learn through inside confederates, whom they have installed as employees, just where there is a bit of flooring, wall or ceiling that has not been wired and through which an entrance can be cut.

"Recently a bunch of crooks located a very rich fur prospect, but learned, through a girl they had placed with the concern, that wires connected with outside gongs and running to the office of a protective agency were strung everywhere, even in the floor and ceiling. The brick walls were the only places not wired. Accordingly they hired the loft directly adjoining, in the building next-door, and began making articles of brass and copper, some of which they actually sold. All day long two or three workers pounded away, but at the same time confederates were slowly cutting through the wall, the little noise they made being mistaken by those in the fur establishment for that of the copper workers. One night, when the quarters of the fur concern were deserted, the work of cutting through the wall was completed, a great quantity of valuable goods was passed through the opening to the loft occupied by the thieves and carted away. No one ever appeared to claim the junk left by the supposed metal workers. It would be a good thing for everybody concerned if all renting agents would make careful investigation of every applicant for space in the silk and fur districts.

"But we've got to keep after the loft thieves night and day, for they are always thinking up new schemes."

INMATES OF STATE'S PRISONS DECREASE

THE number of inmates in penal institutions directed by the State Commission of Prisons decreased 7.8 per cent. during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1923, according to a report made public by the commission. There were 1,017 fewer inmates at the close of the previous year, the report added, indicating a decrease of 8.7 per cent. in the male prison population, but a gain of 2.7 in the number of female inmates.

The population of State prisons decreased 6.4 per cent., the State Reformatory at Elmira 25.6 per cent., the Albion State Training School 6 per cent., and institutions administered by the New York City Department of Correction 14 per cent.

Gains were noticed, however, in the penitentiaries, where there was an increase of 10.6 per cent., the county jails 4.6 per cent. and the Institution for Mental Defectives 25 per cent. There was one more inmate than the previous year in the State Reformatory for Women at Bedford Hills.

The total number of inmates in all institutions was 11,976.

By the Breadth of a Hair

By ARTHUR B. REEVE and MARGARET W. REEVE

CHAPTER ONE

"IF Etta Craven makes me tell my story—what I saw last night—it may be the very testimony that will send Teddy to the chair!"

Mary Mannix was looking earnestly into the trouble-shadowed face staring up at her, wide-eyed but dry—the burning, devastating, flesh-consuming anxiety of one whose sorrow has been so heavy that the founts of emotion are parched. Little Beth Drayton had come to her studio in a terrible predicament.

"I am only a girl, I know," continued Beth, pleading, "but about some things I know more than all the lawyers and judges, and I *know* that Teddy Marbury is innocent. He could not have killed his uncle, old Mr. Marbury. It is not in him to do such a thing. Oh, I cannot tell it all. My heart is too full. Besides, I don't know all. Cannot you advise me, Miss Mannix; tell me what to do?"

"What a position for a girl in love!" exclaimed Mary Mannix. "Of course I will help you, Beth. It is just the kind of thing I want to do—bring happiness back to those sad eyes, perhaps save a life. But first I must see him. Can you take me to him?"

"I—I think so." The girl hesitated, tears in her eyes now. "You know, he has been put in jail out there at the Lake. They arrested him this morning. That's why I came right to you. I haven't lost any time."

"You are sure of him, my dear?"

Unconsciously Mary Mannix assumed the mothering tone. Yet, as far as years were concerned, not many more had passed over her than over Beth. Both were beautiful girls, both young. Each had given her heart to a cause. With Beth it was a man; with Mary, to help other girls. Beth did not answer. She was staring back into the past.

"Are you sure of him, my dear?" repeated Mary.

Moistening her lips, clasping and unclasping her hands, Beth rose and stood by Mary.

"I am so sure Teddy is innocent I would give my life—if in some way that would clear him!"

Mary leaned forward, took the nervous white hands in hers and drew Beth down beside her.

"The eyes of love are keen, Beth. But also they make girls judge blindly afterward."

"But, Miss Mannix, my *eyes* would convict! I'm not judging by what my eyes saw; I am listening to the prompting of my woman's heart. Never have I seen Teddy do an ignoble deed. He is always above that. Many times when people I have loved have been accused of things, not always serious, and have denied them, I have felt a palpitating throb of doubt. I do not feel that with Teddy. Yes, I am sure!"

Mary shook her head and smiled thoughtfully.

"Tell me just what happened the night you were visiting Marbury Manor—just facts."

Beth strove to assemble and voice her ideas.

"My guardian, Mr. Marbury, insisted that I visit the Manor out on Lake Salonga on Long Island," she began slowly. "He was ill and there was something he wanted to tell me. I didn't want to go—much. Teddy was in the city—and it meant I wouldn't see him for several days."

"Couldn't he have visited you at the Manor?"

Beth colored, but, squaring her shoulders, she answered:

"No. He had had a terrible quarrel a few days before with his Uncle Matthew. He was sent from the Manor and told never to enter it again."

A shade of annoyance passed over Mary's face. That bit of frank information was disconcerting.

"Go on, Beth."

"Well, I arrived at the Manor. Mr. Marbury questioned me sharply about Ted. He made me tell everything about our—our engagement. I told him we hoped to be married in the fall. Always before he had been pleased at my plans, but when I finished now his anger was terrible. He called Ted everything in his vocabulary, forbade me ever to see him again.

"I was furious. But Mr. Marbury was an old man. He was ill and weak. I didn't want to excite him. So I left a bottle of medicine Doctor McKillen had asked me to bring down from the druggist in the city. Leaning over, I tried to smile, not to show how angry I was, and left the room. That was the last time I ever saw him alive."

"Go on, Beth," urged Mary in a low tone. "Tell me all."

"I went to bed early, worried. At last I fell asleep. The last thing I had been thinking about was Teddy. He had told me he had a very important business conference that evening. I dreamed I saw him president of a big corporation. It was pretty early for me to retire, so early that I waked up a few minutes before midnight. I tried to lie there quietly in the darkness, to get to sleep again. I heard a noise downstairs. That awakened me altogether. Footsteps! That was strange, I thought. Everybody goes to bed early at the Manor. More footsteps.

"I could stand it no longer. I jumped out of bed quickly, threw something over me, took my little night-flash and tiptoed out into the hall. I came to the head of the stairs. Now I could hear the steps, making for the door in the hall below. They were stealthy steps and I was terribly excited. I went down a couple of stairs. I could make out a form moving carefully about. The door opened. I flashed my light quickly.

"There was the startled face of a man—Teddy!

"Tense, frightened, I started to call, but somehow the words froze. I had to seize the banister for support and the light went off his face. I saw him in the flash, but I doubt if he could have seen me in the darkness of the stairs.

"Suddenly everything was illuminated in the light of the lower hall. I saw Etta Craven, the nurse, standing at the switch in the hall above me. Teddy was gone.

"'Did you see a ghost?' she asked scornfully.

"'No—not a ghost.' I stopped, looked away from her.

"'A little love-affair—in the dark?' She said that cattishly.

"'I heard a noise downstairs. I tried to find out what it was. Then the lights startled me.'

"'I see." She shrugged skeptically. 'Be quiet. I don't want Mr. Marbury wakened by your ghosts—or lovers!' Then she switched off the light, hurried back to her room and I heard her window on the lake side open quickly.

"In the morning they found my guardian dead, his body on the floor by the chair beside the bed. He had fallen from the chair, poisoned. There was just a trace of a deadly dose of strychnin, they said, in his medicine-glass—nothing else. The medicine bottle was gone!"

Mary glanced at her wrist-watch on its black silken ribbon. It was getting along in the afternoon.

"I think we'll not depend on trains. My roadster is on the street. Come. You can continue the story as we are driving out there."

They climbed into Mary's roadster. Across the bridge and out on the smooth State road until they picked up the Sunrise Trail they sped. Beth poured out her heart.

She told all she knew of old Matthew Marbury, without child, wife or other heir

but two nephews, Jason Marbury and Teddy Marbury, nothing but several millions and the great Marbury Manufacturing Company with its drug patents worth a fortune.

Originally, it seemed, the Marbury Company had been two brothers and a silent partner, Drayton. The silent partner had been Beth Drayton's father, chemist and inventor of patents and formulas which the Maryburys had exploited.

During the war Drayton had sold out his share in the company to the brothers, had taken the money, invested it in "war brides," had made money, but finally lost it all in the collapse following the war speculation.

In the midst of the smash Drayton died. He had left his daughter to the care of old Marbury—Matthew, the bachelor brother, survivor of the two, Matthew and Luke. Luke had died the year before. Old Matthew Marbury accepted the charge, took Beth as his ward.

Out at the Manor Matthew Marbury lived the life almost of a recluse in his old age. The business was now handled by the two nephews, sons of Luke by different women; for the younger Marbury brother had been as wayward among women as his elder brother had been ascetic. There had been a more than nine days' scandal when he left his first wife to marry another girl after a love elopement, divorce and settlement. Jason was the son of the first marriage, Theodore the child of the love match.

Mary drew out the story of the romance of Teddy and Beth, but what she most wanted to know was of the terrible quarrel between the uncle and the nephew. Beth told it frankly, as far as she could. It seemed that there was some scandal over a check for ten thousand dollars. It had been drawn to cash, signed, apparently, by Matthew Marbury, who was not very active in the business, and endorsed by Teddy Marbury who, with Jason, was active.

As well as she could Beth told that it had been cashed at the Export and Import National Bank, the Marbury bank, by a messenger boy who now could not be found. She told of the discovery of the fraud, how Matthew Marbury's signature had been forged.

"Teddy swears his endorsement is a forgery also," Beth hastened. "The handwriting experts are puzzled, they say. It looks very good."

"May it be a tracing?"

"Nothing has been discovered yet from which it might have been traced. It looks mighty like a good signature to the experts, so they say."

"What about old Matthew Marbury?"

"He had a stroke when he learned of it. Doctor McKillen was called at once. With him came Etta Craven, this nurse."

"Who is Doctor McKillen?" asked Mary.

"Why, Doctor McKillen has taken somewhat the same place as experimenter and medical adviser in the company that my father once held as chemist."

"And Etta Craven?"

"One of the women I detest!" Beth's scorn was sincere. "Ogling every man with money—with an eye to his fortune."

"Was she after Theodore Marbury?"

"My guardian told me Teddy was after her. Knowing Teddy the way I do, I should say Etta was doing the vamping."

"Well, Beth, if there is any truth in the gossip, that will be bad. Girls play millionaires for money, and that check for ten thousand might be the price of his temptation for Etta. At least, I mean, the other side will say so—use it. Find the person who forged that check and you will find the murderer. That is the big thing we must work on."

"I knew it. But how can we? That woman hates me, hated me even before the murder. I'm sure she was jealous of my guardian's love for me. I have done nothing to her, except exist, and that may be wrong to her. I have often thought, before they spoke of Teddy's infatuation for her, that she was really scheming to marry my guardian in his dotage. She was too solicitous to be natural. It was overdone. Sometimes I could hardly keep from smiling at it."

Mary interrupted:

"She is hitting you at your weakest spot—your love for Teddy Marbury."

Beth nodded, silent. Mary pondered the alleged philandering of Teddy with Etta, determined to go into it more deeply at the first chance. There was the ready explanation that Etta had compromised him; hence the check for ten thousand. Teddy had denied it absolutely, and Beth's faith in Teddy was unshaken. Mary saw much in this conflict of Beth and Etta.

"You were summoned up there?" she asked at length. "Why? By whom?"

"Word came from Mr. Marbury himself. But for what purpose I do not know. Now I shall never know!"

"Haven't you any idea?"

Beth paused, then decided to tell even that rumor.

"I have heard that there was a will in which old Matthew Marbury left all to Jason and Theodore equally. But Teddy had offended him greatly. I had been told of a new will leaving Teddy's share to me."

"Yes?"

"Well, now that old Mr. Marbury is dead —murdered—they say that no new will has been found—not even the copy of it, signed or unsigned; only the old will—half to Jason, half to Teddy."

Mary drove a mile or two before she spoke again.

"If Teddy Marbury's innocence is as complete as your belief in him, Beth," Mary tried to encourage, "he will soon be out of his trouble."

"I wish I could think so." Beth said it wistfully. "Everything looks so black just now. Everything and everybody seem to be against him. I am his only friend."

"Everybody against him? What do you mean?"

"People have talked to me about him—my guardian, Jason Marbury, Doctor McKillen, even Etta Craven. But I have refused to believe them."

"What did they say?"

"That he wasn't true to me—went with other girls when I thought business kept him from me." Beth's lips quivered. "Uncle Matthew told me he had heard that Teddy had taken Etta Craven out to dinner, little parties, had made advances to her. I can't believe it. That was one of the things Mr. Marbury told me yesterday before he was killed."

Mary stared reflectively ahead at the road with its white fences on the curves, pondering this information. She brushed her hand across her forehead. She could see that Beth was watching her face anxiously.

"You told me to tell you all I knew, good or bad. I am telling. As for me, knowing Ted as I do, from baby days—it is impossible!" Beth gripped the side of the seat, staring also ahead as they were coming out to the lake country. "They have accused him of stealing, of unfaithfulness to me—and now of murder. They are all lies—lies. Help me clear him—I'll never believe them—never!"

There was only a lock-up at the lake. The county jail was at the ivy-covered courthouse at the county seat. They drove up, passed the village loafers and curiosity seekers, some advance newspaper men, and entered. It was not long before the two girls had wheedled permission to see the prisoner and were conducted down a dank corridor by a jailer. Beth repressed a shiver at the atmosphere, the carbolic odor of justice in the pen, as she caught her first glimpse of Teddy.

Theodore Marbury was a striking, fine-looking young man, blue of eyes which under different circumstances were merry—an inheritance from his Celtic mother—dark-brown hair surmounting a broad, high forehead, a fine mouth and chin. Mary's first judgment, which was always good, was that there was most reasonable excuse for Beth's love and loyalty.

Teddy was sitting dejectedly on a little wooden bench in his whitewashed cell, his face held close in his hands, his body bent forward, elbows on his knees. Beth stepped, sickly silent, hurt love uppermost.

Teddy's thoughts were far away from the cell. At the noise he did not even glance up, was not, in fact, aware of their presence. Mary nodded toward the keeper in sympathy as both watched Beth.

Beth moved forward on soft slippers, seized the bars with her both hands, peered between.

"Teddy!" she called softly. "I'm here!"

He jumped up quickly.

"Beth! Beth! I was thinking about you!"

"I have been thinking of you, Ted, all day long. I have been trying to get help for you. Miss Mannix—you must have heard of Mary Mannix—wants to talk to you. Ted—I believe in you absolutely. So will she when she talks to you."

Beth pressed her face through the bars and kissed him.

"Beth, dear!" His face had lighted. "Those are the best words I have heard today. Where are all my friends? Deserted me since they heard about the new will—and that bottle. But you are the same, dear girl. If I ever get out of this I'll make your life—— Oh, Beth, there are not words to tell it!"

Mary Mannix waited until the keeper had got out of earshot, watching. Then she spoke to him in a low voice:

"I've promised Beth to bring her happiness, if I may. That means getting you out of this mess. Have you any ideas, any suspicions? Tell me all. What was that about a bottle?"

He answered her in a manner thoughtful, almost whimsical:

"Miss Mannix, I can tell you what I know of last night. But is it right for me to tell things of which I am not sure?" He paused. "I wouldn't want to think I had accused another wrongfully."

"Tell all," encouraged Mary.

"Well, it's mighty little. Somebody called up at my rooms just before dinner while I was dressing to go out. It seemed like my uncle's voice; the voice said it was my uncle. It sounded like him to me. He asked me to come out to the Manor last night, quietly. He wanted to tell me something he had just found out, ask me about it. The next train didn't get me out there until half-past eleven. But I went.

"The train was later than usual. The house was dark in front. I let myself in, went to his room. There he was—Uncle Matthew—dead! I touched nothing except his forehead and hands, which were cold. Then, on the table by his bed, I saw a bottle. It was the same bottle I had seen Beth take out there at the request of Doctor McKillen, a tonic that had been fixed up by a druggist in the city. I don't know what was in the tonic, of course. But I know enough of drugs—it is my business—to know that there was a fatal amount of strychnin in that bottle then—and in the remains in the glass."

Teddy paused, but Mary did not interrupt. She nodded eagerly to go on.

"I determined to take it, let myself out as quietly as I had come in—find out, be sure. I didn't succeed. Beth saw me—maybe some one else—I was nervous, in a hurry. As I crossed the rustic bridge my foot turned; I caught myself against the railing. The bottle fell with a splash into the lake. Then I couldn't find any of the local authorities until morning. I went to the Lodge, got a room for the rest of the night.

"Then, in the morning, at the Lodge, before I could get to them, I was arrested by officers. The bottle, tightly corked, had been fished out of the lake somehow before I could tell of it, analyzed by the druggist over in the village. Poison! My mistake was the mistake of many an innocent man—silence. I should have made an outcry, no matter whether Beth was involved as the innocent tool of somebody or not. There, that is all I know. The nurse, Etta Craven, saw me drop the bottle in the lake, she says. What it is all about, though, is as big a puzzle to me as it must be to you."

"But you must have some idea."

"Idea? I? Somebody seems to have an idea!"

"Teddy!" Mary's voice lowered again and became confidential. "If you insist on concealing your suspicions, at least answer this. Beth has had to deny rumors of your unfaithfulness to her. Some of the stories concern Etta Craven. Are they true?" Mary's voice was a whisper now. "Tell me, Teddy, for Beth's sake. I want to clear you—for her."

"Poor little Beth! They have thrown that at her, too! Mary—Mary Mannix—I have never sought Etta Craven's company. Twice it had been thrust on me. First it

was on a ride in my car from the Manor to the city. Then it was at dinner in the city. I have had to avoid that woman."

Teddy's glance was compelling in its frankness. There was no dramatic denial—just an intense sorrow as over an abominable falsehood that had brought pain to the girl he loved.

"The fact is, I loathe Etta Craven. She is a schemer. I guess she knows it. I have antagonized her, probably, because once I suggested that my uncle get another nurse."

Mary nodded encouragement again.

"How did this dinner meeting come about? Tell me."

There was no hesitation on his part.

"Etta Craven made it impossible for me to get out of it. It was the evening of the ride to the city. We were in the city. Etta Craven discovered she had left her bag at the Manor, with her purse. She asked me to take her to dinner. I couldn't refuse. I asked her where she preferred to dine. She said at the Supper Club, that she knew it so well, had been there often, or something of the sort.

"I had heard of the place, knew it was smart, sporty. But I went and we had dinner. She wanted to dance. I could not be a boor and refuse. But after dinner—it was not late—I left her at her apartment at the Arts. That is the only time I have dined with her away from the Manor, or alone. Always at the Manor or elsewhere there have been others present." Teddy looked down despondently at the concrete floor. "It's just a mess of gossip—to railroad me!"

Mary leaned forward.

"Thank you for what you have confided, Teddy, and the way you have done it."

But now that he had told his story he seemed to shut up.

"If I could answer other questions," he said to her finally, "I'd answer them truthfully. But I don't know anything about lots of matters in this case."

"You must help us, Teddy," persisted Mary. "We need your help, your suspicions."

"I have given you all the facts, as I know them. Anything else would be mere guesses—hence, from me, worse than lies. It would do no good; only harm."

CHAPTER TWO

"THEY say I am a rolling stone," Mary had once told a friend inclined to be critical. "But at least I have gathered no barnacles. Really, all my studies have been just so much training for this career of mine."

Mary Mannix had started life impressed by injustices to women. She had studied medicine first, to help women. But it was more than a physician they needed. She had studied law to help them. Still more was needed. Then suffrage had given them political rights. None of it did what she believed could be accomplished only by a new form of social service for them. Therefore she had gone into work of a new and unique sort. She had added social detective service to her other professions.

Beth was unshakable in her faith in Teddy. Mary knew that and it appealed to her. But first of all she had to satisfy herself of what, to her, was a slight color of suspicion against Beth herself. This had to do with the bottle of medicine.

Mary Mannix had a little formula all her own which she applied to every case. It ran something like this: "You may figure out from every angle that a certain person could not have been guilty of such a deed—and then you may find that that person did it." Accordingly, Mary was not a little perturbed over Beth's reference to that medicine bottle. She had reason to be, as the event was soon to show.

It was unusual, to say the least, to carry medicine from the city to a place not many miles from a prosperous and flourishing town. On the other hand, Beth's complete absorption in Teddy's danger, her zealousness in hunting up those who could testify to his character, and her distress at the plight in which he found himself, seemed to preclude any participation in the crime. Nevertheless, Mary determined, first of all, to find out about that medicine.

When she took the case as detective Mary had obtained the number of the prescription and the name of the druggist. Back in the city she hastened to the pharmacy.

Mary had a way about her. She managed even to get back of the prescription-desk to look up the original prescription on file on a blank signed by Doctor McKillen. It was rather a tonic than anything else. The strychnin in it was comparatively inconsiderable. All that had been in the bottle at once would likely not have killed.

Not so easily dismissed was the fact recollected by the clerk that Beth had been accompanied to the store by a young man who must have been Teddy Marbury, who waited with her and departed with her. That, if anything, made it a bit more for Teddy to explain.

Mary had thought a great deal about Teddy's presence at the Manor that night—the fact that Etta Craven, trained nurse in charge of old Marbury, knew that Beth knew, and was telling it. Why the bitterness? What was back of it?

There was the gossip of Teddy and Etta Craven to run down. She determined to go to the Supper Club that evening.

The Supper Club was a garishly decorated restaurant with a little dance floor. Its ludicrous vividness was due to an endeavor to copy the brilliance of decorating that was fashionable. But it was cheaply and crudely done, an eyesore instead of an inspiration. Mary smiled to herself as she looked it over. On the walls were panels of flamingoes, after Robert Chanler—a long way after—flamingoes that needed splints for reed-like legs, had throats bursting with tonsilitis.

The ensemble gave Mary her cue. With an assurance she scarcely felt she made her way to a little alcove and sat down as if waiting for some one. Several times she glanced at her watch with an assumed anxiety. Still she sat and waited.

A very handsomely gowned young woman stopped at the table and spoke to her.

"May I help you? You seem troubled about something. I am the hostess here, you know."

Mary looked up with her assumed timidity.

"I promised Etta, Etta Craven, to meet her here—and she hasn't come in. Do you know her? Have you seen her? Mr. Marbury was to be with her."

With a nod the hostess grasped the supposed situation. She smiled an experienced smile at the little novice in the gay life.

"No, Miss Craven hasn't come in yet. I know her quite well. I see her here with Mr. Marbury. She'll probably be here soon."

"I've heard so much about Teddy Marbury I am anxious to meet him. Etta talks a good deal about him and the good times they have here." Mary said it innocently enough.

"Teddy Marbury?" the hostess rejoined. "Is he coming again? I thought——" Then, turning to Mary, she added: "Are you sure it is Teddy? Jason Marbury comes here most often."

"Etta wanted me to meet Teddy—so I expected Teddy with her. I thought she had arranged it all."

"She's good if she gets him in here! Why, don't you read the evening papers? That bozo is in jail—for murder! And if that wasn't enough to keep him away, I doubt whether he would come here with her. He has been here only once and she couldn't keep him very long then. He left her flat, I hear. But Jason—that's different. He's some sport." The hostess smiled reminiscently. "Jason Marbury's wild over Etta, kiddo, gets furious when any other man looks at her."

"Murder!" exclaimed Mary. "Whose murder?"

"His uncle, old man Marbury," the hostess answered with satisfaction. It is a keen delight to some people to impart scandal. It flatters them that they are smarter than the rest of the world.

Mary was indeed startled at what she was learning. Here was information that Beth had not found out yet.

"Etta certainly attracts people." Mary added this as the hostess seemed disposed to stay and help her. "All the men like her and most of the women. She has intro-

duced me to several fellows, mighty nice ones."

"Yes, Etta certainly rounds them up. Did you ever meet a Doctor McKillen?" the hostess queried.

"No, but I've heard enough about him," agreed Mary cautiously. "He has a professional interest in her, hasn't he? Gives her jobs, keeps her busy?"

A long laugh from the hostess.

"He sure does keep her busy—and he keeps Jason Marbury busy, too. They love each other like a couple of wildcats. They met here once—that once was enough for the manager. There was one swell scrap. That was a couple of weeks ago. They got too rough for some of the people here, even."

Mary looked up quickly.

"Did anybody get hurt?"

"No, the doctor was put out by a flying-wedge of the waiters. He hasn't been here with Etta since."

"Didn't she mind the fight?" queried Mary, big-eyed. "Mercy! I wouldn't want to come again myself. I'd be ashamed."

"You have much to learn, kiddo!" laughed the hostess. "That fight made Etta. It isn't every girl the men fight over. That night all the men wanted to meet her."

"That's what Etta tells me. I'm not gay enough. That's why I don't hold the men, she says. She said if I'd come here a few nights I'd soon learn how the other girls manage them."

The hostess smiled at her naive remarks. Mary felt that as an ingénue she was getting across big.

"There's a swell bunch of girls here—some of the speediest—and Etta can keep up with them all. Why, Etta has even been down here with old Mr. Marbury!"

Mary began to see a new angle. That was a bit startling—that old Matthew Marbury, the woman-hater, was weakening when a pretty woman was concerned. Had old Marbury been in his dotage? She thought, there's no fool like an old fool.

"It was a joke to watch them," laughed the hostess.

"What could she want him for?" asked Mary innocently.

"You are a baby! She didn't want him. She wanted his money. She was playing every angle for the Marbury fortune. She can wind Jason around her little finger—the old man, too. But Teddy she couldn't manage. I wonder how he'll come out after this murder mix-up."

Mary looked at her watch again.

"Well, if she doesn't come soon I'm going to leave. Anyway, you told me Teddy Marbury couldn't come. If Jason is so intimate with her—well, where do I come in?"

Both girls laughed. The hostess answered gaily:

"If that's the way you look at it you won't get very far! Learn the ropes of the Supper Club—be a sport!"

Mary stood by her chair a moment.

"I'm going out for a few minutes. If she should come in, tell her, please, for me that I'll be back."

They walked slowly to the door. As Mary left the hostess, with evident approval of her face and figure, called:

"Come back soon, kiddo. I'll help you; see that you have a good time!"

Mary had started on the trail of Etta and Teddy. Quite to the contrary, she had discovered that there was actually this fascination of Jason for Etta. Also she had found that Doctor McKillen and Etta were intimate. But the crowning touch had been that Etta Craven had been scheming for old Marbury, as well as the two nephews, Teddy and Jason. She had really seen the glitter of the Marbury fortune. Mary's impression was that Etta Craven was little more than a scheming, demi-monde gold-digger.

The following day was productive of two things in the news. There was published an alibi of Jason Marbury placing him definitely all that night in the city. The other was a rumor that Beth might be indicted as an accessory, or rather in a lesser degree, for the murder. What lent color to the rumor was the seeming fact that Beth had brought up the bottle discovered with the fatal dose of strychnin in it. Mary knew this was merely a club over Beth.

Threats of personal danger had no ef-

fect on Beth. Mary admired that. Besides, Beth's personality was persuasive. Loyalty to Teddy, charm and gentleness quite completed her witchery over Mary.

As the days of her investigation went on, too, Mary's belief in the innocence of Theodore Marbury became complete. His absolute refusal to color his story with suspicions or suppositions, his determination to stand or fall on the merits of his own case, clouded though it was by the cleverly woven circumstantial evidence, made Mary realize the stubborn truthfulness of his character.

Thus it was, that by degrees Mary Mannix had to go on from being a detective and take his case as lawyer.

"Beth," she said one day, "I'm doing the best I can. Teddy's own reticence concerning possible motives that might have induced other people to commit the crime is one obstacle."

"Poor Ted! He is so afraid he will put some other person's life in danger he cannot keep his own safe! Then, too, he doesn't know enough of what happened that night before he came to and after he left the house. Well, I'll fight. I don't care who is hit. I have faith that in the end truth will come out. But, oh, Mary, please, work as you have never worked before—for him! If Ted goes—I go! I can't help it. This anxiety is killing me now!"

Mary looked at the little girl. Her eyes were unnaturally bright. Fever spots glowed in each cheek. The slender form seemed to be growing more fragile each day.

"For Teddy's sake, Beth, keep up! You are the only one back of him now!"

"I know it, too well. Just two women fighting for one man's life. It seems as if the whole world were against him!"

Came at last the day of the trial in the damp, ivy-covered courthouse under the ancient elms, with its dismal painted courtroom redolent of the stern old days, its bailiffs with historic tip-staves, the judge a pompous man of precedent, of cold justice, the jury of hard-headed, horny-handed farmers—everything but the powdered wig that savored of the trappings of the old days of the common law.

To Beth it all seemed so easy, so cruel, so merciless, as the district attorney appeared with his air of nonchalance, confidence, almost callousness. It was an irritant to Mary's usual methodical procedure, too, disconcerting.

Hours wore away with the presentation of the evidence establishing the murder of old Matthew Marbury. Then other hours with a minute and circumstantial presentation of the evidence of the will, the two wills, the second missing.

There was the testimony of handwriting experts for the state, the forged signature of Matthew Marbury, the endorsement on the ten-thousand-dollar check, agreement among the experts for the state that the endorsement by Theodore Marbury had all the marks of being genuine.

"Jason Marbury!"

A tall, thin, youngish man rose from his chair and strode to the witness stall. His hair was dark and he wore it long and stringy in front to hide a bald spot. Was that age—or dissipation? A furtive manner accompanied his soft voice. It seemed as if his glances were never still. He had been accompanied to court by a Japanese valet, whose constant smile was a relief after his master's Cassius visage.

"Where were you on the night of June thirteenth?"

"In New York. I had gone to the theatre, arrived home about eleven-thirty. It was warm. I went to bed."

"What do you know about this case?"

"Nothing except what I have read in the papers."

Jason Marbury was dismissed. Then his valet, Toki, was called to corroborate his statements.

"Doctor McKillen!"

A portly, dignified man with the first indication of high blood pressure strolled with easy dignity to the witness-box. Immaculate, he was all that many people desire in looks for a practitioner, with a voice that boomed when he talked. Scant though it was, his testimony seemed a high-light to the bored spectators that crowded the court making a spectacle as they always do of a trial

The prosecutor reached down and took a paper from the table. He examined it carefully, then extended it.

"I hand you this paper and I ask you if you can identify it."

The doctor took it, regarded it also carefully, then raised his eyes. "This is the prescription I wrote for old Mr. Marbury."

"Read it."

The doctor did. His tone was convincing that it was a panacea.

"That will do, doctor." The prosecutor took the paper back, turned and handed it to the clerk of the court. "I ask that this paper be marked in evidence."

Followed the drug clerk who had filled the prescription, then a battery of experts, toxicologists for the state who had examined the body, analyzed the contents of the bottle recovered from the lake, everything.

Hour after hour, through adjournments and re-assemblies of court, wrangling and argument the case progressed, day and hour ever nearer the moment that Beth had dreaded. She knew that the beginning of those moments was at hand. Beth's heart sank as she saw the antagonistic, supercilious glance of Etta Craven calmly on the bench not far from Jason on one side and Dr. McKillen on the other.

Beth, just back of the counsel table, could not help a whisper to Mary ahead of her: "Etta Craven is going to make me tell! Why does she hate me so?"

Mary tried to smile reassurance. "I can tell you better when I hear her story!"

"Etta Craven!"

The nurse stood up. Her manner, her appearance, were immaculate. She was young, with a florid, assertive beauty. Smiling about her to the jury and the judge, yet never overdoing it, she took her place on the stand. The usual formalities were quickly disposed of.

The prosecutor cleared his throat. "Do you know the defendant, Theodore Marbury?"

"I do." Was that a sardonic smile at Beth?

"Are you on friendly terms with him?"

"No."

"You are not? Why?"

"No, we are not friends now. When he was visiting his uncle, a few months ago, he tried to be very friendly with me. It soon changed. It became most objectionable. I could stand it no longer when he attempted to force his way into my apartment in the city one night after he had driven me there in his car and led up to it by taking me to dinner and urging drinks on me" She paused. "He threatened me if I ever told."

Beth's face was white. "It's a lie!" she exclaimed. The judge frowned, pounding for order in the court.

Teddy started up from his chair, incredulity on his face that it would be believed, but despair in his heart at the hostile air of those who only a short time before were his friends. A restraining hand was placed on his shoulder by a court attendant. With a helpless smile at Beth, a forlorn resignation, he sank down in his seat again.

"Did you see anything strange or unusual the night of the murder?" the prosecutor asked, keenly.

Etta answered carefully: "I heard stealthy steps go past my room the night Mr. Marbury was murdered. I put on my kimono quickly and slipped out of the room quietly. I saw a woman's figure in the darkness. She was leaning over the banister and peering down at some one who was leaving by the front door below."

"Did you recognize the woman?"

"Yes. It was Beth Drayton," snapped out Etta positively.

"What was she doing?"

"She had a flashlight, and had turned it on the door. It looked as if it might be to help the man out quietly."

"I object!" interposed Mary. "What might be is immaterial, irrelevant and incompetent."

There was a wrangle and the form of the answer was changed. But Etta smiled knowingly at the jury as much as to say that no one was going to tell logical men what conclusions they might draw.

The prosecutor's next question startled the room into silence. "Who was the man?"

"In the flash of light it looked to me like

Theodore Marbury. Beth Drayton knows. She looked as if she had seen a ghost!"

A moment later, after other questions of identification and of what she had seen out of her window, the prosecutor bowed. "That will be all now, Miss Craven."

Mary could not get much out of cross-examination and soon the direct testimony of the prosecution was finished.

On her part the witnesses Mary had been able to gather together were those whose testimony would tend to establish the honesty, truthfulness and uprightness of the defendant. There were also the handwriting experts, by which she attempted to show that the endorsement on the check was too good; that it must be a tracing. But of course the unanswered question was: From what?

"Superimpose it!" shouted the prosecutor. There was nothing forthcoming to clinch the point except Teddy's denial. Would the jury believe her experts against those for the State?

Another point was that by her detective work she had discovered that the contents of the bottle as found were not the same as the contents of the bottle brought by Beth. But, then, so far the prosecution coincided with her. They contended that Teddy had made the substitution; she that some one else had done it.

As Beth followed it she wondered intuitively whether the jury would believe that Teddy did not do it. After all, there was of course only Teddy for himself to create the reasonable doubt. And Teddy on the stand in direct testimony could not tell any more to save himself, for he did not know any more.

As Teddy answered the grueling cross-examination of the prosecutor, he looked frankly at all those he knew about him. Animosity, avoidance met him. Dr. McKillen and Etta lowered their eyes. It is one thing to answer a prosecutor boldly, with a sneer at a young girl in distress of heart; but it is difficult to look steadily into the face of a man who is likely soon to meet his God by reason of evidence you have helped to give.

Teddy felt it when he faced the crowded court-room, too. Always he had avoided acts that would bring notoriety on him; he had preferred to be unobtrusive. Under the quizzing his face whitened with a pallor more ghastly than before. His hands were restless; they played with the buttons of his coat. Several times he moistened his lips. As if mentally to shut out the people before him he slumped in his chair; he would have liked to stoop so that his eyes would come to the side railing that would have cut off those faces, blaming and scorning. To get desperate relief he would look at the beautiful but now colorless face of Beth. Her eyes encouraged him. He would make an effort to stand up at those persecuting him so unjustly. Yet he could not resist the feeling that it was of no use, that no one would have believed me—except Beth him. He was innocent; he was less afraid of his future and his God than of those calloused souls out there who were driving him to death. Only Beth—he hated to leave her to their scant mercy.

"Theodore Marbury." He started at the sound of his own name uttered in the sharp staccato of the prosecutor. "Did you or did you not enter Marbury Manor the night of the thirteenth of June?"

"Yes—I was sent for by my Uncle Matthew."

"Why did he want you?"

"I cannot answer that exactly. Over the telephone he said it was something he had found out about a forged check."

"Did he tell you when you arrived?"

"No," Teddy murmured with a sickening fear of the district attorney's questions. "He was dead—had been dead some time."

"Why didn't you call out at once?" almost shouted the prosecutor. "Let the other people in the house know?"

"My visit was to have been secret. After the estrangement between my uncle and me, I had a feeling that no one at the Manor would have believed me—except Beth Drayton. I tried to go the same way I came. Then I wanted to have the bottle of medicine analyzed. There was strychnin in it, I know—a lot of it. I wanted to know how much—to compare it with the prescription——"

"Is that the reason you threw the bottle away in the lake? That bottle might accuse you, too!" There was an audible murmur in the courtroom.

"I didn't throw it away. I stumbled on the rustic bridge at the head of the lake. It fell out of my hand."

The prosecutor paused and eyed the jury significantly.

"Why didn't you give the alarm when you reached the Lake Lodge? You had no bottle then to be analyzed!"

"I tried. I called the sheriff—and you—but I could get no one. I finally decided to recover the bottle early in the morning. But before I could do even that you came for me. I suppose some one had got you out looking for me when I was trying to get you."

The prosecutor sought to riddle that. Suddenly he flung the question: "When you took that bottle from your uncle's room did you also take the signed copy of his new will—did that also fall in the lake?"

"I took nothing but the bottle. I am no thief—or worse. I know nothing about the will. I never saw it."

Beth waited. She knew her ordeal was before her. She could not lie. Now they would force her to tell. She knew that her testimony would be Teddy's death warrant.

Who would believe that Teddy, under the circumstances, had come late at night to make peace with his uncle after a telephone summons from him? He had nothing to show the jury to prove it—nothing but his word. And it was what they would expect him to say in his own defense, no matter how black his guilt. They would not believe that he had lost his head when he found his uncle dead in the room. Yet she knew, knew as well as she knew her own heart, that that was precisely what had happened. He had thought that no one had seen him come; no one would see him go. But two had seen him—the girl he loved and the woman who now swore that he had schemed to compromise her.

Handled by Mary, Beth did her best to soften her testimony. But in rebuttal the State called her as its own witness. It was clever, the way the prosecutor handled it.

Under her simple blue dress Beth felt her heart pounding. Her throat was dry, her lips parched. As she made her way again to the witness stand the sea of faces swam dizzily before her. All was a blur—except those baneful eyes of hate of Etta Craven.

"Steady, Beth. Tell as little as you can. God will help with the rest," had been Mary's advice.

For a minute, two minutes, the prosecutor stood watching her. The frightened girl seemed like a tiny mouse in the power of a huge cat. They were playing with her lover's life, with her own life and happiness with as little sympathy as a cat with its dinner. To the prosecutor a conviction meant much in politics. The farmers resented this expense; feared a new trial would raise the tax rate a few points. On such trivial injustices hung justice. For those two minutes the prosecutor seemed to calculate his attack.

"Theodore Marbury accompanied you to the pharmacy. Did Theodore Marbury see that bottle of medicine?"

"I didn't show it to him. When the clerk handed it to me I dropped it into my bag. Nothing was said about it." She faced her tormentor fearlessly. He frowned at the evasion.

"Did he know you were taking that bottle to Marbury Manor?"

"How could he tell? He went only as far as the Long Island station with me. I didn't talk about it. I might have taken it to a dozen places and he would have been none the wiser."

"Answer this question categorically—yes or no. No more of this evasion. Did Theodore Marbury know that medicine was for his uncle?"

"I didn't tell him it was for my guardian. At the time the errand seemed so insignificant I didn't discuss it."

"Did the clerk say anything about it—that it was for him?"

Beth hesitated, looking helplessly about her. She caught sight of the clerk in the back of the room. She knew what to expect.

"Yes," she almost whispered.

"What did he say?" thundered the pros-

ecutor, with an expansive glance at the jury. He was well pleased with himself.

"He asked me how to spell my guardian's name. It was written illegibly on the prescription. He wanted to know whether it was with a 'y' or a 'g'." Beth's knees were trembling.

"Ah! Where was Theodore Marbury standing when the clerk asked you your guardian's name—near you?"

"By my side."

Another smile toward the jury. But the prosecutor was not through with Beth. "Only a few more questions, Miss Drayton. You testified you saw some one leaving the Manor as Miss Craven came up behind you. Who was the man you saw leaving late the night of the murder?"

Beth swayed a moment in the chair. "I cannot answer that question positively." she replied in a weak voice. "It was only a glimpse I had. I was so nervous—the flashlight in my hand shook—and when I looked again the man was gone." Mary nodded encouragingly at Beth as Beth stared at her for help.

"Why did you move the flashlight off his face the instant you heard some one behind you?"

"I didn't. I was nervous——"

"Why were you nervous?"

"Why was I nervous?" Beth raised her voice. "I'm no different from other women. When one has heard what one thinks is a burglar downstairs and starts to investigate, then hears another noise back of one—one is likely to be nervous—don't you think?"

"Did the glimpse of that particular face you saw add anything to your nervousness in connection with this noise in the hall behind you?" It was put with an incredulous smile.

"N-no."

"Well, whose face did you think you saw? Was it Teddy Marbury's?" The lips of the prosecutor were drawn in a cynical smile as if he saw through her discomfiture and fright. Beth grasped the arms of the witness chair, leaned pleadingly forward, her eyes asking as plainly as words, "Must I answer that?"

Mary was on her feet in an instant with an objection. "May it please the court, but I submit it is not what one thinks in a case like this where a man's life is at stake. It is what one knows."

There was another wrangle. Again the form of the question was changed, with a shrug of his shoulders and a disparaging smile of the prosecutor.

The faces of the jury were non-committal. But Beth might just as well have said it was Theodore Marbury she had seen. The effect of the wrangle and the evasion and the vain seeking for indefiniteness was used by the prosecutor with his theatric ability to convey to the twelve men the fact that she had seen her lover and did not want to tell it.

"Beth!"

The prosecutor's tone changed suddenly. He spoke gently, ingratiatingly. He knew, none better, when to leave off bullyragging a witness, more especially a woman, a sympathetic girl.

"Beth, you love Theodore Marbury, don't you?"

Beth had not been prepared for this. Mary had not coached her for anything except to be flayed. She looked at him a moment, startled. Before she knew it, she was murmuring softly: "Why—yes!"

The prosecutor let a full minute slip by. Then he spoke to her, but his look was at the jury. "That will do, Miss Drayton!"

The trap had been baited for a woman's heart. It had been a question she was proud to answer. The jury seemed to realize that it had witnessed one of the dramatic moments in that old courtroom.

A few moments later the prosecutor exclaimed: "Your honor, gentlemen of the jury, on that the prosecution rests its case!"

The words were uttered with all the flourish of a district attorney who was an old hand at the criminal law, at reading human nature, sizing up a jury. He knew how evidence, just enough, not too long-drawn out, loomed as conclusive. Quickly Beth saw how her declaration of love for Teddy had been used. Crushed, she sank in her chair in the court-room. Finally she raised her eyes to Teddy. She found him looking lov-

ingly at her. All the message she could flash back was compressed in the look: "Forgive me—dear!"

They were tense moments when the jury filed out, tense moments when once they sent in for instruction on a point of law and again for some of the evidence. Would they acquit, disagree?

Tensest of all was the moment when it was announced that after four hours of debating they had reached a decision, when the prisoner was brought in again to hear the verdict, when the jury itself filed back into the box and stood, when the judge addressed his question to the foreman and the breathless crowd hung on the answer.

"We find the defendant guilty as charged!"

Beth did not faint. Perhaps it would have been better if she had, if the suppressed emotion had only sought the safety-valve of tears.

Teddy was being led out in the pin-drop silence of the room.

Beth only closed her eyes, wearily, murmured a prayer. Strange how we turn in our agony and despair to God for comfort!

As Teddy passed a few feet from Beth the love in her eyes seemed to light the way of the man for whom the verdict had opened the doors of darkness and death.

(*To be concluded in our next issue.*)

WHOLESALE FORGERIES

LAZARUS SCHENFELD, a lawyer, pleaded guilty before Judge Collins in the Court of General Sessions recently to an indictment charging him with forgery on six different counts. He had made a complete confession to Assistant District Attorneys Harold F. Hastings and John Caldwell Myers. Judge Collins granted Schenfeld's request to postpone sentence until February 23.

Assistant District Attorneys Myers and Hastings declared to Judge Collins that the accused was one of the most expert forgers they had ever heard of. Myers showed to Judge Collins more than thirty different signatures acknowledged by the prisoner to be forgeries. It is said that he obtained more than $16,000 by forgeries.

By pleading guilty to the indictment Schenfeld is automatically disbarred as an attorney. His indictment is the result of two months of investigation into a number of fraudulent letters of administration which have been presented to banks and trust companies by means of which he obtained sums of money held in trust for people supposed to be dead.

The method pursued by the accused in obtaining these sums of money by forged letters and signatures, as was brought out in court, was first to watch the obituary columns in the newspapers, then the advertisements of various banks endeavoring to locate depositors after five years or more of absence. Learning thus of sums being held at banking houses, Schenfeld forged letters of administration to obtain the money.

One of the signatures, supposed to be that of a bank cashier, was so remarkable a forgery that the bank cashier himself declared he was unable to detect it. The signature referred to was affixed to a paper guaranteeing another forged signature.

Assistant District Attorney Hastings stated that the first case of forgery he is known to have engaged in occurred several years ago. One John Zronik, who was supposed to be missing, had $1,100 on deposit in a certain bank, which advertised for information concerning him. By means of a forged letter of administration Schenfeld obtained the money, giving apparent proof of Zronik's death.

The very next day, however, Zronik appeared at the bank. The cashier showed him the papers presented by Schenfeld, which they found to be forged. Since then the prisoner is said to have carried on a profitable business in forging papers and securing funds held for people that could not be located.

Demon Stiletto in Pursuit

By HENRY W. FISHER

[Here's a story of destiny which seems to show that whatever happens to man is determined by antecedent causes, producing foreordained results. I report facts, I don't argue or press a point. If you choose to infer from the incidents set down that inexorable Fate has fixed all things beforehand, your ideas on that score coincide with those of such eminent men as Cromwell, Calvin, Luther and Mohammed (not to mention a host of philosophers of all nations). If, on the other hand, you think it all accident, the contingency that, when last seen, Demon Stiletto was riding the waves of the Pacific Ocean does give support to that view. Indeed, Demon Stiletto is riding on the tempest, in a sort of scaly torpedo, doing hundreds of knots an hour.]

CHAPTER ONE

THE Italian girl, who looked as if she had seen better days, balanced her basket with plaster casts on her hip. "Don't want any of them mutts?" she asked in a hurt tone, eyeing the conglomeration of queer animals, bearded heroes, goddesses, cupids and kings.

"None of that trash; wouldn't give it house-room," said I, about to shut the door upon the pedler.

"Tony!" she yelled, leaning over the banister. And out of the dusk of the floor below—I was living then in an old studio building at No. —— Washington Square—emerged a swarthy figure, a man in rags, with a wilderness of hair on head and face.

He seemed in no hurry, though the girl kept prodding him by voice and gesture. While he slowly came up, he kept his eyes on mine. Maybe he intended hypnotizing me, or was practicing the efficacy of the "evil eye."

"My stiletto, quick! Heem" (inclining her head towards me)—"heem artist, heem buy," whispered the girl, half coaxing, half threatening. She had to repeat that more than once. At last Tony pulled up a trousers leg and took a longish something from the shaft of a knee-high boot.

Corpus Delicti

The girl instantly grabbed it, and peeled out of a layer of Italian newsprint as magnificent a dagger as ever hung from an Arab chief's belt.

"Fifty dollars," she said, letting the light play on it; then handed it over for examination.

Real 18 carats; richest oriental design; arabesques and flowers, birds, emblems and butterflies outlined in semi-precious stones; richly colored beryl, garnets, and also some genuine pearls. The dagger was easily worth three times what she asked for it.

"I will take it because it's you," I said, with an eye to business. "Not worth the money, but beats your mutts all hollow, anyhow."

Tony seized the dagger by the hilt. "Mine," he said; "you pay me, boss."

"You lie!" cried the girl, fiercely, and turned to me. "He gave it to me long ago; and, besides, it's my sale, isn't it, senor?"

"Of course." Their dispute was nothing to me. So, offering the $50 bill with one hand, I took my purchase with the other.

Then things began to happen with lightning speed. The girl pounced upon the banknote the padrone had seized, grabbed it tight and bolted down the stairs, he after her, threatening bloody murder and stab-

bing the air with the blade he had jerked from the sheath in my hand.

I thought it a put-up job. Their play acting had cost me half my purchase, but even so, the sheath was worth more than I had paid. And maybe I would run across the girl or Tony by and by; then I would choke the knife out of the bandit, man or woman.

The Sleeping Village.

When the children are all tucked in bed, dreaming of the mischief they hope to do tomorrow; when the twilight of night, tempered by occasional electric bulbs, hides the dirt and the human derelicts poking in the ash-cans, then mystery is liable to roam abroad even in commercially minded Greenwich Village. Such was my experience, at least, a month after the comedy sketched.

I was walking towards my bachelor quarters in the Square late one night when a cry to make the heart sink within you tore into shreds the stillness of the hour.

It came from on high, maybe the third or fourth story of one of those tall, moldy houses across the road. There was breathless terror, the agony of despair, in it. Others heard it, too.

A cop came running; the all-night cafeteria-on-wheels on the corner spat forth a trio of young men of the counter-jumper type. They were doing the Bohemian stunt, and this excitement was a cordial indeed.

"Was that you?" demanded the policeman, regarding me suspiciously.

"Take him for a siss? It was a woman's voice," sang-out the chorus, just as a second yell burst from the darkness of the housetops.

The Missile.

The cop and the fake Bohemians put their shoulders to the door of the house and counted "One-two-three, there she goes." "She" didn't the first time, but gave way after a while and I heard them run up the stairs. I was about to follow—when in the Village, do like the Villagers—when a shining object cut through the air in front of me. In passing it grazed my coat and trousers. I touched the spots and found them damp with a sticky mess.

"Blood," whispered the nearest arclight. And blood was on the missile lying at my feet. There had been a sound as of metal when it struck.

"Carving-knife," I thought, bending down to pick it up; but it turned out—I could hardly believe my eyes—to be the dagger those Italians had robbed me of. Now, as said, the blade was dripping with blood; the hilt, too, was spattered with it.

A Human Mystery

While debating what to do I felt a hand on my arm, and

"Hush!" whispered a voice that somewhere or somehow I had heard before. "Keep it dark, Signor. Oh, don't put the cops wise." Then anxiously: "Hide it quick, won't you?" I thought I recognized the speaker. To be sure, the Italian statuette pedler. Pleading and trembling in every limb, she held onto my sleeve.

The moment I recognized her the idea that she was concerned in the upstairs tragedy flashed across my mind, and, curiously enough, at the same time I remembered the dagger-sheath I used to carry on the chance of finding a blade for it.

Indeed, I had found it; the stiletto entered the sheath smoothly, went home like a shot. To tell the truth, I should have been much surprised if it hadn't. I was in luck; my stolen property had returned of its own accord. Yet if any one had predicted as much thirty seconds ago I would have thought him crazy.

What Made Me Do It?

"Taxi comin'; let's scoot," whispered the girl.

Now let it be understood that Elena was not pretty, that in no way she appealed to my senses, that I had never thought of her other than a cheat, or worse; moreover, I suspected her of complicity in a crime committed almost before my eyes, and her wish to run away certainly bore out that half-conviction.

Yet, at the suggestion of this girl, I en-

tered into compounding a felony without hesitation, though up to then I never had any truck with shady persons or acts.

Whyfore or wherefore came the urge to aid and abet a crime in the person of this girl, who, far from having a claim upon me, had apparently conspired with one of her countrymen to rob me?

Clearly there are driving powers in human nature to which we submit our better knowledge, and notwithstanding their denial by facts recognized as such.

CHAPTER TWO

I stopped the taxi a block from my studio and sent cabby on a wild-goose chase in the Bronx, paying him in advance. If he wasn't around he couldn't be questioned by the neighborhood police.

When we got upstairs Elena implored me to return to the house to see what the police had discovered.

The Prisoner

I saw the cop in the doorway holding tight to his prisoner. He was blowing a whistle; the chaps that had followed the policeman into the house still formed his rear guard. Presently an ambulance clattered up.

"What's wrong, Mike?" queried the sawbones.

"This here wop killed his woman. Four flights up, front. Stone dead. The morgue for hers."

"Did you get his gun?"

"Nope, bread knife, and stepping on her windpipe."

"I would have to tackle those d—— stairs even if he had swallowed her whole," said the doctor disgustedly. Then, slipping on the stoop as he attempted to pass by the prisoner: "What's that? Didn't you see the pool of blood off of his leg?"

The ambulance doctor, used to quick action, took a knife from his surgical case and, kneeling, ripped the prisoner's corduroys below the knee. In the calf of the leg was a big, gaping hole from which blood oozed freely.

"Regular gusher," said the doctor, applying a patent bandage. "If I wasn't all eyes he would have bled white in two minutes more."

Elena's Excitement

Up to here the statuette pedler had listened silently to my report, but her wide-open eyes and twitching mouth interpreted violent emotions. Now her pent-up feeling broke loose.

"Tony'll die?" she cried, horror in her voice.

"Tony?"

"Heem that I stabbed—you know heem!" and she explained: "Heem, Tony, that stole my fifty and the stiletto of the Signor."

Her outburst re-envisioned to my mind the frowsy figure I had seen swaying at the cop's side. Yes, indeed, he might be the fellow that had robbed me, the same sort of unkempt blackguard, same figure, same dirt.

The Murder Story

The statuette pedler snatched up the dagger from the table and, lurching low, aimed its point at the hinder part of my leg below the knee. Much eye-play accompanied the act. Then, without my urging her, she began a detailed story. She used good English, barring a few idiomatic solecisms.

"Tony is my sister Maria's husband," she said. "Tonight I went to her flat to get my share of the fifty he took from me down in the basement of the Signor's house. Me and Maria were asleep when he came tumbling in, and hearing his noise I slipped off the cot and into the closet before he could strike a match. But he saw my shoes at the fireplace and knew that I was in. His cursing awoke Maria and, jumping up, she got between heem and my hiding-place just as the match went out. He talked wildly at sister, then I heard heem choke her, and in the darkness I slipped out and behind heem, for I knew the dagger was sticking

from his pants pocket. He always carried it there of late."

Elena, breathing hard, paused a moment or two, then resumed, even more rapidly than before.

"I got it out"—holding up the dagger—"there was no cover, you know, and I heard sister tearing and twisting and catching the furniture, and her throat rattling like crazy. I crouched and struck at heem where I chanced."

Struck Deep

"The knife went in deep into his leg, you say? Very deep," she repeated with every evidence of satisfaction, "and to make sure I gave it a turn 'round."

She illustrated by twisting her right hand and wrist so abrupt and savage, no doubt she had enjoyed the actual carving.

The Voice in the Night

"Who cried out, Maria or you?" I asked.

"Not her. Heem no fool, Signor. Tony started garroting her first thing. Maria never had the chance to holler. I did while he was choking her, and I cried again when I heard the bread knife go into her. Then it was that I stuck the stiletto into heem ver' deep.

"After that, noise in street. I peeped through shutters. The cop and men were ramming our front door. When I heard them on the stairs I threw this"—holding up the dagger by the hilt—"from the window, then sneaked into the dark hall. Just in time. They passed me so close I could feel the heat of their bodies. Lucky that the cop had no torch, and of course there is no light on the stairs in our house.

"While they searched for matches I slid down the stairs in my stocking feet and found—the Signor."

Then I noticed for the first time that Elena wore no shoes.

Cleaning the Stiletto

"I must clean this," resumed Elena, unsheathing the stiletto. "Where's the sink?"

She washed the blood off, then polished the steel on her petticoat.

"Good shine, Signor?" she smiled, holding it into the light. And proud of her cleansing, she forgot the occasion for it. Next she passed a rag up the slit of the sheath on a long hatpin from my dresser, substituting other absorbent cotton once or twice for the soiled pieces. When the pin broke she inserted the blade itself to dig out the débris and dislocated it after considerable coaxing.

With it finally a blood-smeared bit of paper covered with microscopic writing dropped out.

The find did not seem to surprise the girl at first, but after she had flattened it out on her knee and had scanned the lines she got excited.

"Italian writing," she then explained. "Tony's."

"Tony was a scholar?" I gasped.

"Pedling wasn't his trade, anyhow," she replied sharply, adding with emphasis: "At home Tony used to be an author of note, but"—in a lower key—"the illiteracy and commercialism of the Italians in America denied him a living here. As he couldn't stand poverty, he gave way to drink, and as time went by drink made a beast of heem; yes, and dope finished the job."

While talking she had continued to pore over the paper culled from the sheath. I ventured the usual commonplace regrets that drugs had proved the undoing of another good man.

"But they didn't! I was mistaken!" cried Elena fiercely.

Again she bent over the manuscript, reading and re-reading and declaiming some passages aloud. Then, looking me full in the face, she struck the paper with the flat of her hand.

Fate

"All was Fate; all that happened had to be," she declared. "Dope had nothing to do with the case. Listen and mark that Tony wrote this paper a year ago. See the date: November 13, 1921."

Here follows a correct translation of Tony's manuscript.

Murderer Fate

"Man lives well or ill, enjoys renown or suffers disgrace, an early or late death, according to Fate's inexorable decrees, settled since time immemorial on aforeshapen lines.

"An inner voice tells me that I must die, directly or indirectly, by the dagger I prize so highly. That argues that whoever eventually will use it against me will not act on his or her own account or responsibility, but merely as the agent of Fate—*i. e.*, the Supreme Power which, thousands upon thousands of years ago, planted into the bowels of the earth the seed of that identical piece of iron which is destined to cut short my existence.

No Private Concerns

"The party actually stilettoing me may think himself or herself an avenger, lover, hater, political enemy—it matters not one straw.

"Fate, that made the mountain and arranged therein conditions for the formation of metal—inexorable Fate really deals the blow that will strike me down.

How Fate Works

"Cunning Fate! Having resolved that I shall die by the dagger, it imbued me with passion for the beautiful and sumptuous in arms. Accordingly it crowned the fatal blade with a golden hilt of superb workmanship, a joy to the eye, and encased it in a sheath of gold, pearls and enamel.

"This dagger is the remnant of a once considerable inheritance, spent in my struggle to gain a footing in a foreign country! Since poverty holds me in a grip of iron I was tempted to sell it time and again. Moreover, in moments of strenuous self-assertion I persuaded myself that I could shake off the spell cast upon me since the beginning of things. But I bargained without Fate—Fate, that is as cruel as it is crafty. Every time I sold the dagger it came back—somehow it came back. Sometimes by appeal to the buyer's generosity, at other times by dubious proceedings or downright theft. God knows I am honest by heart. Yet whenever I had disposed of the dagger later I resorted to some sort of banditry to regain it. Couldn't help it.

"What does that argue? That I can no more escape the Fate reserved for me than I can stop the growth of the tree which will furnish the wood for my coffin or of the chemical compounds that will be used for cremating my body. To repeat:

"The sale of this dagger might bring me life's necessities for a little while, but instead it is foreordained to be the death of

"Antonio Frascati."

Elena to the Y. W. C. A.

Having finished the manuscript, Elena said:

"Tony often raved like that, only sister and I were too busy keeping life in our bodies to pay much attention. But I see it now; Tony wasn't a bad man. He was a *marked* one. His fate, I remember, was revealed to him in a dream while he was still sober and industrious, trying hard to make a respectable home for Maria.

"That dream drove him all but mad. He gave up trying—what was the use?" added the girl. She leaned back, extending her limbs like one utterly exhausted. Presently she fell into a troubled sleep lasting ten or more minutes, then started up all of a sudden, shrieking:

"Take me away; I can't abide by that murderous thing there, which made me its accomplice! Oh, Signor, for the love of God, take me away!"

I called a cab and took Elena to the downtown branch of the Y. W. C. A. I paid her board and lodging for a month on the understanding that neither would recognize the other if we ever met again. That's the last I saw of Elena.

The News Story

As I got off the L train at Eighth Street West a ragged-looking man asked me to buy a paper from him. He pleaded that he wanted a coffee and roll, and I was glad to accompany him to the nearest all-night lunch-room, for I was desperately hard up

for company after the mysteries encountered.

On the first page of the paper the caption, "Murder Mystery," spread over five columns, caught my eye. The story was on the second and told in matter-of-fact style all about the murder of Maria Frescati by her husband Tony. "The latter used to be a person of consequence in his own country," said the paper, "but had been known to the police for some time past as a dope-fiend and surreptitious distributor of the cheaper grades of cocaine and the like under the cover of statuette-pedling."

"The woman," said another paragraph, "seemed to have been badly choked by her assailant, but death was due to a knife wound in her breast."

The story continued: "Tony himself was bleeding profusely from a gaping wound in the calf of the leg. The ambulance surgeon employed heroic means to save the murderer, but medical attendance came too late. The man died shortly after he had been booked at Bellevue Hospital.

"The police are puzzled by the man's wound, since it penetrated much deeper than the knife found on the premises would allow. Besides, the blade used on the leg was seemingly narrower and less coarse. Further, it appears to have been turned in the wound. No other knife or weapon was found in or about the Frescati's squalid home."

Died by the Dagger

As the story was later corroborated by the hospital authorities, there can be no doubt that Tony died by the dagger. A flesh wound that under ordinary circumstances would have healed in a few days was the death of him, as set down in the manuscript of November 13, 1921.

What made him the victim of determinism, absolutely sure of his facts, of the fate awaiting him?

Subconscious cognitive faculty, as the obscure have it—that is, the convictions that humans are allowed no voice whatever in shaping the condition of their lives, that they cannot change or influence—"What has been known unto God from the beginning of the world" (Acts xv: 18).

Or was Tony actuated by memories of a curse pronounced thousands of millions of years ago? Who'll decide or ever know?

Unanswered Questions Frightened Me

Brooding over this, I had half made up my mind not to keep the murderous thing when a note from Elena decided me. Aboard an outgoing Italian steamer, bound for South America, she wrote:

"The gratitude I owe you, Signor, prompts me to beseech you to get rid of the weapon that killed Tony lest it turn against yourself."

Three days later I dropped the stiletto into the ocean from the steamship *St. George,* plying between Cuba and Bermuda.

I took the precaution to cast it off near the twin-screws, expecting the dagger to become entangled in the thread of the propeller, where it would be ground to pieces.

The Live Torpedo

Instead I saw it ride the waves for a second, just as a gurnard (flying-fish) leaped into sight from a considerable distance. He gulped it down—more ammunition for a live torpedo.

The flying-fish's most formidable enemies are sharks.

If a shark swallows the flying-fish with the dagger inside of him—what then?

Like the famous ring of Polycrates, it may return from its watery grave. Old King Polycrates, it will be remembered, kissed the signet ring which he had come to regard as bearer of ill luck and threw it into the Aegian Sea, only to have it served up some time later in his breakfast fish.

Up to then Polycrates had been renowned for good fortune, but after this fish affair he died the unhappiest of men.

If the dagger returns to earth by the shark route, whose destiny will it become? If we dare assume that Fate willed events of today long eternities ago, it follows that the happenings of tomorrow, of a hundred of a thousand years hence, may be forespoken even today.

While the Lights Were Out

By A. B. MONROE

IT was a cold January night. Outside the wind howled fiercely as it drove the sleet against the windows with an ever-increasing force that threatened to break them. Now and then some belated passersby, homeward bound, could be seen with coat collars turned up and heads bent forward as they pushed against the wind and sleet.

Thanking my lucky stars that I did not have to venture out on such a night as this, I filled my pipe, drew my chair a little closer to the open fire, and settled down to read another chapter before turning in.

For over twenty years I had been actively engaged in secret service work at running down criminals. And now at the age of forty-three I found that the long hours and many hardships that I was forced to endure during these years had made an old man of me. Upon the advice of my physician I finally consented to take a long rest in an attempt to regain my shattered health. I therefore spent a rather meaningless existence between the club and my rooms. I found great comfort in my books and pipe, and breathing the flower-scented air of some far distant land, with crime and criminals furthest from my thoughts.

I was thus seated, absorbed in a very interesting book, when the doorbell rang. My slippered feet thumped to the floor as I laid aside the book. Glancing at the clock, I saw that it was nearly midnight. Who could be calling on such a night, and what was the urgent errand that brought them out at this late hour?

Full of curiosity, I opened the door and found Richard Blake standing on the threshold.

"Alone?" he asked, as he brushed by me and closed the door.

"Yes," I said, "trying to interest myself in a book to pass away the time."

"Bob," he said, as he sank down into a chair without removing his coat, "I'm in a devil of a fix and need your assistance. Are you awfully busy just now?"

"Not at all," I answered. "What kind of assistance do you require?"

"I want a good detective," he answered.

"That's easy," I replied. And I started to tell him of a reliable and competent private detective, when he cut me short.

"No, no," he said. "I want you to handle this case personally."

I had known Blake since he was a boy, and although we had always been good friends, and had whiled away many a long hour at the club over a chess-board, I found that he was one of the kind who are always in trouble. First his girl had deserted him, later he was swindled in a stock deal, later on his apartment was robbed, then his automobile was smashed, and many other hardships befell the boy during the many years that I had known him. I was therefore not much surprised when he stated the nature of his errand.

Although I would have been willing to give him any other possible assistance, I did not welcome the thought of sleuthing. Perhaps he saw by the look on my face that I was not overjoyed at the prospect, and hastened to say that it was a very urgent matter. He was willing to reimburse me for my trouble, and only asked that I get to work on the mystery at once.

At his very urgent pleading, I finally consented to lend a hand in the affair in an endeavor to clear up the mystery that threatened to drive him mad.

He seemed overjoyed, and at once plung-

ed into his story, which, briefly told, was as follows:

A few days previously he had received an invitation to be present at an informal dinner-party at the house of Maurice Blackwell, president of a large importing concern, and who was reputed to be a multi-millionaire. Mr. Blackwell, who was a collector of old coins, had a rare collection, including a few new coins, which he wished to display to a few friends. Blake at once accepted the invitation, as he was somewhat interested in old coins himself.

On the following evening he met a man in a hotel lobby whose card read, "James Ashburnham, London, Eng." Although their meeting was purely accidental, and Blake knew very little about Ashburnham, the two struck up a rapid friendship, and Blake invited the Englishman to his club. Ashburnham accepted the invitation, and a very pleasant evening followed.

The Britisher was a man of wonderful personality, had traveled extensively, visiting every nook and corner of the globe, and above all was deeply interested in old coins, having no small collection himself, which, with the exception of a few he had with him, were stored in safety-deposit vaults in England.

After the second meeting, Blake had asked Mr. Blackwell's permission to bring a friend with him to the dinner that was to be given the next evening. Mr. Blackwell had readily consented, and thus it was that earlier in the evening Blake and James Ashburnham were present at the home of Maurice Blackwell.

After the dinner they had all retired to the smoking-room, where Mr. Blackwell exhibited his collection.

The one coin, which was the cause of so much trouble, and which had brought Richard Blake to my apartment in the middle of the night, was the last one shown.

This, a gold piece, was about the size of an American silver dollar, and upon taking it up from the collection, Mr. Blackwell explained that he had spent many thousands of dollars, and had sent his agents to the four corners of the earth in an attempt to locate the only duplicate in existence, but their search, so far, had been fruitless.

The coin was passed to those present, each of them examining it separately.

Blake recalled that as Ashburnham took the coin he gave a short gasp and became very deeply interested in the gold disk.

It was at this moment that the lights were suddenly extinguished, plunging the room into darkness, and it was nearly five minutes before the butler appeared with candles, and about ten minutes more before the lights again were turned on. As the lights flashed up the butler took the candles away.

At this point Mr. Blackwell noticed that the large rare coin was missing. A short search about the room failed to reveal it.

Ashburnham admitted that he was the last one who had the coin before the lights were extinguished, and stated that he laid it on the table at about the same time the lights went out.

A short argument followed, in which Mr. Blackwell openly accused Ashburnham of having stolen the coin.

At the height of the argument one of the men present suggested that each of them be searched before leaving the room. This suggestion seemed agreeable to all with the exception of Ashburnham, who turned a deathly white. He caught up his hat and coat and dashed out of the house.

Mr. Blackwell immediately telephoned the police. Half an hour later they informed him that Ashburnham was being detained at the police station, he having been arrested at his hotel.

Blake had immediately gone to the police station, where he was allowed a short interview with the Englishman. Ashburnham swore that he knew nothing about the missing coin, and was positive that he had laid it on the table as the room was plunged into darkness. He did not attempt to offer any explanation about his queer actions, and would not say why he refused to be searched, or why he left the house so hurriedly. He begged Blake to employ the best detective skill in the country, and wished them to search the house and question the butler, he being ready to foot all bills.

As Blake poured out his troubles to me, he explained that he felt in a very embarrassing position himself, as it was he who had brought Ashburnham, a comparative stranger, to the home of Maurice Blackwell, where a priceless coin was missing, and Ashburnham under arrest charged with the theft.

Blake wanted me to locate the coin and return it to its owner, but did not want me to accuse Ashburnham of the theft, as he felt positive the Britain was telling the truth and knew nothing of the whereabouts of the coin.

After half an hour's instructions Blake took his departure, promising to meet me the following morning.

As the door closed behind him, I filled my pipe once more, and sitting down before the fire let my mind run over the queer incidents of the evening. The more I thought the matter over the more the finger of suspicion seemed to point to Ashburnham. I wished more than once during the night that I had told Blake I did not care to handle the case. If Ashburnham was not guilty, why had he left the house so hurriedly? And why had he refused to be searched?

It was nearly two o'clock before I gave up in despair and decided to get a little rest before daybreak.

As the clock struck nine the next morning I found myself seated before an order of bacon and eggs, which I devoured rather hastily. Leaving the restaurant, I summoned a taxicab and was driven to the office of the electric-light company, where a short interview with the manager brought forth the fact that at 9.10 p. m. on the night previous a fuse had blown out, leaving the circuit dead until 9.25 p. m. The Blackwell residence, I was informed, was on this circuit.

I was told that there was nothing at all suspicious in connection with the fuse blowing out, and the trouble was traced to their own plant, where an insulation had chafed off, allowing two wires to cross.

One point in Ashburnham's favor I said to myself as I left the office.

I gave the chauffeur an order to drive to the Tombs, where Ashburnham was being held.

On arrival I found Blake in earnest conversation with Inspector Bryant, and was informed that Ashburnham had paced back and forth in his cell the entire night, and had eaten no breakfast.

Bryant smiled broadly when I informed him that I was in hope of clearing Ashburnham of the charge against him.

His reply somewhat startled me.

"Not a chance in the world," he said.

"Why? Any new evidence?" I inquired.

"Enough to hang him. We were able to check up his movements last night, and learned that upon leaving the Blackwell residence he took a taxicab to his hotel and hurried to his room. He immediately requested that some sealing-wax be sent to him. The bellboy who took the wax recalls seeing a package about two inches square lying on his desk. We have been unable as yet to ascertain what became of the package, but hope to throw some light on the matter before night. We are working on the theory that he mailed it to some pal."

"Any objections to me talking to the prisoner?" I asked.

"None at all," answered Bryant, as he led the way down a short flight of iron stairs.

Ashburnham had been allowed the freedom of a short corridor, and we found him pacing nervously back and forth. Upon hearing footsteps he whirled around and quickly glanced at each of us. Quickly darting forward, he grasped my hand.

"And is this the detective?" he asked.

I informed him that I was, and that I would like to question him before proceeding further with the case.

"Go as far as you like," he said, as he drew me over to a wooden stool, where I sat down.

I took a quick survey of the man, and must admit that I was somewhat surprised and pleased at his appearance. He was about forty-five years of age, about six feet tall, stood very erect and appeared to be every inch a man. His smooth face was somewhat bronzed and this, together with his square shoulders and athletic build, told me at a glance that he was more at home

out of doors than he was in the drawing-room.

"I can see," he said, "that you, too, think I am guilty. You are at liberty to think as you like. I admit that I acted in a strange manner last night; that I refused to be searched, and that I almost ran from the house. But in the face of all this I still maintain my innocence. I *did not* take the coin; haven't the slightest idea who did take it, or where it is at present."

He stopped abruptly and looked inquiringly at me as if to see what effect his words had.

"Mr. Ashburnham," I said, "I do not know who has the coin. But I do know this, that the coin is missing. I am personally acquainted with all the five men present and, knowing them as I do, I feel safe in saying that they are innocent of any participation in this crime. I do not know you, but you yourself admit to Blake that you have information which you will not divulge. You know something that you are hiding, and in my opinion you know more about the affair than any of those present. If you are telling the truth when you say you know nothing about the disappearance of the coin, I cannot possibly imagine why you should wish to hold back any information that would be of assistance to Mr. Blackwell or myself. I must tell you frankly, Mr. Ashburnham, that the only interest I have in this case is in trying to clear the name of my friend Blake of any suspicion in connection with the affair."

Five minutes later Blake and I found ourselves on the street alone.

Perhaps it was Ashburnham's straightforward manner, or perhaps it was a sort of intuition that comes to the man who has spent his life hunting criminals, that told me that the Englishman was a victim of very unfortunate circumstances.

Turning to Blake, who was walking at my side, I said:

"I do not know why I say this, but I cannot bring myself to believe Ashburnham is guilty. His whole manner seems to protest against my branding him a criminal, and although I must admit there are many points that are not clear at present, I intend to see this affair through."

Blake's face lighted up as he grasped my hand.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I knew you would not desert me at such a time. I, too, feel positive that Ashburnham could not have had any hand in this affair. But why does he remain silent? Why does he not explain all? Why should he prefer to stay in the Tombs than tell what he knows, if he is not guilty?"

"That is one thing that I cannot explain at present," I answered. "But I am in hopes before the day is over to see daylight where all seems darkness now."

We had been walking in the direction of the Blackwell home and soon reached the mansion.

A servant took my card and ushered us into the reception-parlor. We had only a short time to wait before Mr. Blackwell appeared. After shaking hands with both of us, I explained my mission, and asked permission to examine the smoking-room.

"Certainly," said Mr. Blackwell. "I will be only too glad to help in any way possible to clear up this unfortunate affair."

We went to the smoking-room, where a search began. The tables, floor and chairs came first in line, and no ordinary place of concealment was overlooked.

After an hour's careful search I rose to my feet about ready to give up. Every possible place of concealment we could find had been carefully gone over.

Walking slowly to the door, I glanced down the hall and saw the door of the butler's pantry just swinging closed, and my eye caught a fleeting glimpse of the silver candlesticks setting just inside the door.

"Anything further?" inquired Mr. Blackwell.

"Yes," I answered. "I would like to see the candlesticks that were brought to this room last night."

Mr. Blackwell reached for the bellcord, when I stopped him.

"No," I said. "Do not ring. I think I just saw them, and would prefer to examine them where they set."

A faint smile seemed to cross Mr. Black-

well's face as he led the way to the butler's pantry.

I raised the first candlestick from the shelf, and as I did so a gold coin was seen sticking to the base. Mr. Blackwell quickly grabbed it, with a look of amazement on his face.

"The missing coin!" he finally said. "How in the world did it get there?"

For answer I showed him the concave bottom of the candlestick.

"The butler," I said, "evidently set the candlestick on the coin, as Ashburnham laid it on the table, and upon removing the stick he unconsciously took the coin, which wedged itself in the concave bottom, away with him."

"And you think Ashburnham had no part in this?" inquired Mr. Blackwell.

"I am positive he did not," I answered.

"Then what was the reason for his silence?" insisted Mr. Blackwell.

"I expect to clear up that point within a short time. The first thing to do is to see that Ashburnham is released."

"I shall attend to that immediately," said Mr. Blackwell, and he went to the telephone and called for Police Headquarters.

Proceeding to Ashburnham's hotel, we had not long to wait until a taxicab drove up and we saw the Britain step out.

As he entered the lobby he saw us, and rushing forward he grasped both of our hands.

"How can I ever repay you two?" he asked earnestly.

"By making the whole matter clear," said I, "and thus draw this unique case to a close."

"And I am certainly anxious to do so now," answered Ashburnham, "but I wish those who were present last evening to hear my story, and I should also like to have you present," he added, turning to me.

"I should be very glad to be there," I replied.

After a short telephone communication between Blake and Mr. Blackwell, it was arranged to have the same gentlemen present at eight o'clock that evening at Mr. Blackwell's who were there the night previous, and I was included.

Shortly before eight I arrived at the Blackwell home and found the little party complete with the exception of Ashburnham, who had not yet arrived.

After a hearty handshake with each of the gentlemen present, I took a chair by the table to await the coming of the Englishman.

I had not long to wait, for as the clock struck eight he was announced, and a moment later entered the room.

He bowed rather stiffly.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," he said, as he walked to the table, where he remained standing. "I came here this evening to account for my rather queer actions of last night. This is the explanation," he said, as he drew from his pocket a gold disk and laid it on the table. "The only duplicate of Mr. Blackwell's coin in the world. I had it with me last evening, and therefore could not be searched for fear they'd think it was the missing coin. Rushing to my hotel, I mailed the coin to myself, under an assumed name, to be held in the general delivery at the post-office until called for. I was arrested shortly after, and you gentlemen know the rest."

Apologies were in order for the injustice done him, and when I departed Blackwell was trying to buy the Englishman's coin.

Two of a Kind

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

GREGORY, chancing to glance over the top of the book he had been reading to beguile the tedium of a rather lengthy railroad journey, glimpsed one of the most interesting and picturesque characters he could remember meeting in all his wide experience as a Secret Service officer.

It was certainly the head of a patriarch, with its halo of snowy hair and a full beard to match. Heavy white eyebrows completed the artistic picture, which somehow reminded him so irresistibly of his favorite poet, Walt Whitman.

Curiosity caused him to continue those furtive looks, in hopes of seeing the stout old gentleman's eyes; for it had long been Gregory's pet hobby to gauge men by what he could discover in the depths of those twin orbs, said by poets to be the mirror of the soul.

Capricious Fortune favored him, and by a curious twist of circumstances there opened up for his entertainment one of the most curious as well as interesting episodes of his life.

The old gentleman looked directly at him, and even seemed to smile amusedly, as though quite accustomed to having utter strangers survey him with more or less admiration and interest.

Nor was Gregory in the slightest degree disappointed in his anticipations. Those wonderful sky-blue eyes absolutely completed the picture of pure, unadulterated benevolence—so kindly did they beam, as seen through the gold-bowed spectacles, upon every one with whom he came in contact.

He was smoking an unusually fine Havana cigar, Gregory noted, as he caught a whiff of tobacco smoke that pleased his highly trained olfactories.

Those eyes haunted Gregory, as he once more turned to his book; he could not dismiss them from his mind, for they seemed to hold a challenge. He had left Washington on a well-earned two weeks' vacation, the first in three busy and successful years of service with Uncle Sam's pack of human sleuth-hounds. His book was Frank Stockton's "The Lady or the Tiger," which he had read more than a few times in the past, and always the vital question with which the story closed remaining unanswered in his mind.

"I certainly have looked into those quizzical eyes before now; or at any rate a pair miraculously like them," he was telling himself, as curiosity continued to grip him more and more; "but the man I recall surely had not that halo of white hair and such silky whiskers bearing them company. I never forget a face I have seen before, and the boys even call me the Moniker Man in the service because of the dependence they place upon my identification of suspects; but this thing seems to get my goat."

So he continued at intervals to almost mechanically turn the pages of his book, casting frequent glances over to where the fine old philanthropist sat.

Gregory was trying to picture what the party with those dancing blue eyes might look like if divested of his hirsute adornments. Then he started to pursue a favorite and usually successful practice, when groping in the dark for some name that had slipped his memory. Commencing at the letter A, he would go through the alphabet. If one turn failed to bring about the hoped-for answer, then the operation was repeated.

There was no necessity for such a repetition in the present instance; when he reached his own letter, G, he seemed to mechanically whisper a word:

"Gennett!"

Somehow he felt a little thrill pass through him at the mere mention of a name so intimately associated with one of the most exciting episodes connected with his chosen work. Yes, he could never mistake those humorous, quizzical blue eyes; but when last he looked into their pellucid depths Gennett, one of the most audacious as well as most successful counterfeiters the Government officials had ever sought to cage, was starting on his way to the Federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas.

He remembered distinctly how Gennett seemed to bear him no malice for being instrumental in bringing him to justice. Indeed, on the contrary, he had asked the Secret Service man to shake hands with him; he joked concerning the fine steel bracelets he wore at the time, and even thanked Gregory for thus bringing his iniquitous career to a speedy close, saying with apparent seriousness:

"It will give me seven years, counting good behavior, for introspection; and"—as his eyes twinkled with genuine humor—"who knows how far the pendulum may swing to the other side by the time I come out?"

Of course Gregory had taken no stock in such absurd possibilities, for, being an old detective, he believed, like all his breed, that "once a thief, always a thief."

Well, the seven years, as well as some three additional years, had crept by, and here the detective found himself once more gazing upon an original character whom he could remember reckoning as most unique among the whole catalogue of clever criminals. Cogitating over the matter, he already realized that the peculiar fascination attending the solving of a tough problem was likely to make drakes and ducks of his vacation.

"I'll not enjoy one minute of this lay-off," he was telling himself, complainingly, "if I allow Gennett to slip out of sight without picking up some information concerning the meaning of this astounding change in his make-up. Hang the vacation! It can come again later; but never will a fat chance like this cross my path. Wherever Gennett holds forth, there is sure to be something going on—like the white plume of Navarre in battle's fiercest stage."

That settled the matter once and for all with Gregory. He simply could not afford to let this golden opportunity escape, when the Goddess of Luck had tapped him so generously on the shoulder in passing by.

Half an hour later he saw the benign-looking old party toss his magazine and papers in his grip, and understood from these signs that he was preparing to alight. Schuyler was the next stop. Gregory remembered it as a rather forlorn little place, when, some five years back, he had been compelled, through a serious smash-up on the road, to spend there the better part of a full day.

As the train slowed down at the station Gregory could see that Schuyler must have received some sort of boom since his last visit, awakening, as it were, from her Rip Van Winkle sleep; for many new cottages had been built.

He waited for the old man to alight, then he dropped off after the train had started. Wonderingly he noted how obsequiously the station agent greeted the elderly, saint-like looking traveler, as though welcoming him back home again.

"Well, one thing is evident—he certainly seems to have gained the esteem of the good people of Scuyler," was what Gregory was telling himself, as he continued to watch from behind a freight car that stood on a siding, while being loaded with all manner of new packing cases and crates. These boxes denoted that some factory was building up Schuyler so miraculously.

Several people saluted the patriarchal-looking man as, after entering a superior make of car, operated by a chauffeur in livery, he passed along Main street and beyond.

"He certainly is flying high," he observed, grimly; "but then that crook Phil Gennett never would take any other fellow's dust or make two bites of a cherry. With

him it was always top-notch in the game—or nothing."

He now approached the agent, hoping to get posted on how affairs stood before going deeper into the matter. Without any needless beating about the bush, he proceeded to ask questions that were to the point.

"Who's the fine-looking old party, I'd like to know, if it's all the same to you, my friend?" he queried, as he proffered the man a cigar. "You see, I'm an artist, on my vacation, and I'd have a masterpiece if the old gent would allow me to do his portrait for the next Academy exhibition."

"Oh, no trouble about that, sir," he quickly answered. "You see, our Mr. Gregory would do just *anything* to oblige a fellow. Best-hearted man that ever drew breath. And Schuyler owes her present prosperity and bustle wholly to his interest and generosity."

It certainly did give the Government detective a start to thus abruptly learn early in the hunt how Gennett, grim joker that he was, when coming out of Leavenworth penitentiary, ready to start life afresh, had had the audacity to utilize the name of the detective responsible for his long incarceration.

"Mr. Gregory is a native here, I take it?" he ventured.

"Not at all, sir—just took a great fancy to the place. It was so retired and so cozy, he often told me, he knew he'd like it. That was nearly two and a half years back, when he opened up a factory here, and with such success that twice since then they've added new wings to it."

"That all sounds like an Aladdin fairy to me," mused the Secret Service man, "and mighty interesting, I assure you, my friend. By the way, what kind of goods does his factory turn out, if it's a fair question?"

"That's one of his trucks you see unloading at the freight siding, sir. All those crates and packing boxes are full of wonderful toys for children next Christmas. It seems that as a boy Mr. Gregory lived over in the Black Forest country of Germany, where every village makes toys exclusively. After the big war there was a lot of talk in the papers about not allowing German-made toys to be sold here. It didn't seem just right for innocent American children, many of them orphans now, to play with things made by the hands that killed their fathers. So Mr. Gregory, who had a great head for business, and plenty of idle money, too, saw a grand chance for filling the gap. He has over fifty men and boys employed in his business, and taking on more every week. All these new cottages are occupied by his hands, sir; so you can see how Mr. Gregory has been the salvation of this town."

"Where can I find his factory, for I must certainly meet this most remarkable man?" And really the detective meant every word of it.

"He was so taken with the looks of the old haunted mill property, sir, that first of all he bought it in, adding a new wing. He gets power from the running stream that used to turn the mill wheel for all his electric lighting and to run his saws. Lots of people have dropped off here on purpose to have a look at the place, which they tell me hasn't its equal for originality over there in the Hartz Mountains of the toy villages in Germany."

"Whew!" Gregory was saying to himself. "the attraction of a haunted mill apparently gripped the attention of even a reformed counterfeiter, so that he could not resist buying it. This certainly is a most interesting case, no matter which way the cat jumps."

Aloud he only went on to remark:

"But this philanthropist who, it seems, has saved Schuyler from utter extinction, doesn't actually live at the old mill factory, does he?"

"I should say not, sir; why, his new house and the grounds around it are the show place of the town; and the park is open and free to all the people. No danger of any vandalism, I want you to know, sir—everybody in Schuyler thinks too much of Mr. Gregory to pick a flower or annoy the deer he keeps in an enclosure. You can depend on it he's just as friendly and kind as he looks."

Gregory only waited to ask for directions as to how he might reach this entrancing

estate of Schuyler's great benefactor, after which he set out on foot, wishing to allow the ex-crook plenty of time to reach his home before seeking an audience.

When some twenty minutes later he sauntered up a well-kept driveway leading to the door of a most delightful-looking villa, embowered in flower bushes and shade trees, he had quite decided in his mind that the old counterfeiter knew how to surround himself with all the comforts that unlimited means could secure.

Still there existed the "doubting Thomas" spirit, inherent in a man of Gregory's nature and profession, causing him to almost believe it would turn out a dream, from which he must presently awaken.

He used the quaint old-fashioned knocker to sound a summons, and presently the door was opened by the owner of the place. No one could possibly look more genial, more benign as, holding out his right hand, the same one the detective had accepted ten years before under rather different conditions.

"I have been expecting to have you drop in on me, Mr. Gregory," was his cordial salutation as he beamed on the Government officer, and warmly squeezed his extended hand; "for I easily recognized you in the smoker, and felt certain you had also figured out my identity, despite my changed appearance. But please step inside to my library, where we can have a heart-to-heart talkfest without any of my servants eavesdropping. And you must look my factory over while here; I hope it will meet with your approval."

They were no sooner seated than the old gentleman, fixing his dancing blue eyes on his unbidden guest, went on to say:

"First of all I know you must be thinking me over-bold in having apparently appropriated your good name after I sank that of Gennett in the sea of oblivion. But it isn't quite as bad as all that. I am known nowadays as Philip Gregory, which is actually my baptismal name, as I can easily prove to you. Perhaps you might not be proud to acknowledge the fact, but I have always labored under the impression that if we cared to trace our ancestry back a few generations we might prove to be of kin."

"I am chiefly interested in the near-miracle of your redemption, Phil; how did it come about?" asked the detective.

"A very simple matter, after all, Mr. Gregory," came the ready reply. "You may remember my saying that seven years would be a good long period for reviewing my misspent life, and discovering what a sad mess I had made of things? My mind was pretty well made up at that time as to what I meant to do, but the accidental reading of a book caused me to settle definitely on my future, if I lived to be free again. That book, sir, was Victor Hugo's masterpiece, in which he tells of the trails and triumphs of an escaped convict."

"Ah! yes, of course you refer to the immortal 'Jean Valjean'?"

"Exactly, sir. His case appealed to me, as being in some measure parallel to my own. I, too, had experienced a change of heart—I, too, had a pot of money hidden away when I came out of the pen, just as he did the second time he escaped; though I must humbly admit mine had not been gathered through honest methods of barter and trade, like his.

"I firmly resolved to employ that money for the benefit of mankind in general, in hopes of making amends, to some degree at least, for my long career of law-breaking. I saw the opportunity for starting in to manufacture all manner of toys, being myself descended from a long line of clever toy-makers.

"Then I also remembered a wonderfully picturesque and abandoned water-mill, situated near a village that was rapidly going to decay through lack of energy and punch. So here I located, fetching my experienced toy-makers from the city one by one as needed; also building them cozy homes, as possibly you have noticed."

"I've seen the cottages," assented the detective.

"Through my humble efforts Schuyler has been revived," the old man went on; "many families were given work the year round, and at good wages; the business is growing, with orders on our books we shall

be hard pushed to fill; and best of all, Mr. Gregory, I feel as though I were a rejuvenated man, with the respect and esteem of hundreds encouraging me to continue in well-doing."

"Your case is remarkable," said Gregory.

"After you have taken a look through my bustling shop, I trust, sir, that you will kindly forget that you have ever again crossed the path of the deeply repentant Phil Gennett, who once upon a time found such keen delight in snapping his fingers under the noses of Uncle Sam's most proficient detectives and defying them to catch me with the goods. I should dearly like to end my days a friend to everybody, young and old, rich and poor alike, in little old Schuyler."

"You can depend on me to keep your secret, Phil," Gregory assured him; "always provided there arises no suspicion of wheels within wheels."

"Never again for me, Mr. Gregory; the game has lost all its former allurement in my eyes. What I yearn for most of all now is tranquillity; peace of mind; no dreaming of bulls on my track, and also the feeling that I am of practical assistance to my fellows. In the few years that still remain before I cash in I trust I may still be permitted to keep on trying to wipe out that wretched past. But come and see my plant, sir; I am certain you will like the outfit."

The detective was deeply interested as the kindly old gentleman led him through the human bee-hive, where on every hand he saw all manner of wonderful mechanical toys in process of manufacture.

Gregory seemed particularly interested in a small but ingenious miniaturre savings-bank. It was being sold, he was informed, to trust companies by the hundreds and thousands, for the use of their depositors; and discovering that the wholesale price was an even dollar, he insisted on taking a sample with him.

In vain did the generous proprietor try to force him to accept it with his hearty compliments, as a token of his esteem. Gregory was adamant, and declared that he would not rob the good people of Schuyler of even the profits on one savings-bank. So he insisted on paying for it out of a twenty-dollar bill extracted from a vest pocket, with the excuse that he needed small change anyhow. And when he received a ten, a five and four ones in return, he could not help noticing anew that merry twinkle in those sky-blue eyes.

Shortly afterwards he again shook hands with the man who through sheer repentance had done so well. Gennett insisted on sending his guest to the station in his luxurious seven-passenger car to take the next train, which vehicle, Gregory learned from the garrulous chauffeur, was almost daily used to carry parties of the villagers on picnics and junketing trips, as special guests of the kindly old gentleman.

When Gregory returned to Washington after his vacation one of his first acts was to visit the Treasury Department, to which he had sent (after marking each one plainly with his initials in red ink) all the bills received in change from Schuyler's benefactor.

"Here's a puzzle for you to ponder over, Gregory," was the way he found himself addressed by the head of the Department; and unlocking a drawer in the great safe he took out something which he spread before the Secret Service man. "We found this particular number of our Federal Reserve Bank ten-dollar notes one-third burned off, you notice, in the list of those forwarded by a large New York bank for redemption, to be destroyed when new issues had been printed in their stead. You will notice, Gregory, that these bills are as much alike as two peas in a pod—same number identically! And the devil of it is, one *must* be genuine, and the other necessarily a counterfeit, so perfect in paper and every minute detail that up to now it has baffled our experts to decide which is the true and which the false."

Gregory rubbed his chin in a hazy fashion—somehow he again seemed to see the whimsical gleam in those sky-blue orbs of Schuyler's benefactor, and wondered if Gennett had been audacious enough to put one over on him. Was the old-timer running true to form again?

A Great Detective

TREATING a crook decently will sometimes reform him.

One of the first noted American criminologists to advocate and practice humanitarian methods in dealing with felons, William Allan Pinkerton, head of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, was credited with having reformed more safe-blowers and bank thieves than any other man in the country.

Mr. Pinkerton died in the Hotel Biltmore, Los Angeles, Cal., on December 11, 1923, aged 77.

Primarily a thief-taker, Mr. Pinkerton spent more than fifty years of his life running down criminals of all classes, yet he always stood ready to proffer a helping hand to the unfortunate malefactor whose repentance was genuine and whose desire to reform was sincere.

William Allan Pinkerton and his brother, Robert A., succeeded to the business of their father, Allan Pinkerton, when the latter died in 1884 after founding the detective agency which bears his name. This was before powerful armor-plated vaults, electrically operated and protected, were heard of and safe blowers were in their heydey. Determined to specialize in bank protection, William Pinkerton enlisted the support of leading financial institutions of the country and then made a detailed study of the men who were preying upon them. He warned noted bank robbers as they were arrested:

"You leave my people alone and I'll leave you alone. If you don't I'll follow you to the end of the earth."

This warning made a deep impression upon many of the most dangerous thieves, and after a few convictions had been obtained there was a noticeable decrease in the number of bank robberies. Some scoffed at the detective's warning, but most of them were caught in time.

He knew more men and women probably than any man in America. Whether he sat in the lobby of a hotel in New York, Chicago or Frisco, he knew them all, good or bad. Aristocratic and influential men were glad to know him, for he was an amiable and most entertaining character.

So William A. Pinkerton became a millionaire, thanks to the kindly advice of his wealthy friends and to the business established by his father, Allan Pinkerton.

"Uncle Billy," as he was called, knew the members of the theatrical profession better than their own managers knew them. They loved him. He was ever ready to protect them against wolves. If, by bad luck, they were stranded, he floated them with funds. He delighted to go to the theatre; it relaxed his tense mind.

Like everybody else, he admired Lillian Russell. She was in Cleveland, playing an engagement and stopping at the old Hollenden House. One afternoon, while she was at the theatre, a thief broke into the hotel suite she occupied and stole her most valuable jewels, besides furs and lingerie. Lillian Russell, in distress, called Pinkerton in Chicago by long-distance phone. He got in touch with his Cleveland office.

His Cleveland operators got busy, reported to their principal, and Pinkerton, as always putting his finger on the man or mob capable of such a job, sent word: "I want that back!"

The thief had followed Miss Russell over half the United States. In Cleveland he got a job as a window washer in the hotel where she was staying. The rest was easy —until he ran up against Pinkerton. The thief yielded to Pinkerton's forceful demand, but retained a certain sentimentality. He answered:

"All right, governor, I'm sending the stuff to you, except the pink silk nightgown."

Pinkerton told Miss Russell.

"Oh, yes," she exclaimed; "by all means let him keep the nightgown"; then added: "It belongs to my maid."

Pinkerton was a great criminologist. Scotland Yard, the Prefecture of Police in Paris, almost every police center in Europe and South America, consulted him frequently. In pursuing a thief, a burglar or a forger he had remarkable insight and intuition. He knew a criminal by his handiwork; if there were no fingerprints left on a safe they were left on Pinkerton's mind by the style in which the job was done. He knew whom to seek and he knew the means of finding them.

His word was sacred. He never broke a promise to a criminal. He would not tolerate third-degree methods. If one of the underworld vowed to him that he was trying to go straight, Pinkerton would help him. But God help him if he did not go straight!

He often said he had more sympathy with a thief than a liar; a thief might be driven by need, a lie is at the end of every man's tongue.

William A. Pinkerton was a charitable man; he sent to prison many men and his philanthropy kept many unfortunates out of jail. Always he urged leniency for a first offender. He is known to have appealed to the governor of a State for the pardon of a man whom he had apprehended.

Modest, although he had an infinite number of friends among newspaper men, he detested publicity.

Crime detection has progressed much since Pinkerton was in the heydey of his success, and his death leaves another vacancy in the small, dwindling group of old-school detectives, who offset by shrewdness what they lacked in science. Laboratory methods are so fast superseding certain classes of crime that many of the most famous "detectives" of Europe at the present time are men of academic and scientific training, who have little or no knowledge or experience with the underworld. But in spite of Pinkerton's practical training and his natural tendency toward conservatism he kept surprisingly up to date, and indeed on many occasions proved himself ahead of his times.

When he had reached a point where he could afford to retire from his active pursuits and look back upon his experiences in the fight against crime, he said:

"I am a firm believer that there are very few criminals so hardened who at some stage of their lives will not, if handled in the right way, forsake their criminal occupations and become better men. It has been my experience with many a criminal coming from prison that if he is given encouragement and advice, with assistance, in some occupation, and is permitted to continue it, he will forsake his criminal ways for a respectable living. Many, of course, backslide into crime, but for "every brand redeemed from the burning, I feel some good is accomplished."

On another occasion he said:

"I have always contended that there is no such thing as an hereditary criminal. In my lifetime I have known many clever professional criminals who guarded the secret of their lives from their children, not allowing them to associate with the same class of people the parents mixed with, but giving their offspring good educations and surroundings and making every endeavor to bring them up righteously and in many cases religiously."

A slight incident that happened only a few days ago shows that Pinkerton was a real friend of the criminal, and that his views were not merely abstract theories, but that he actually put them into practice. Among the long line of visitors that streamed into the Pinkerton office the day that he died were two men who bore the unmistakable imprint of prison life. They were sitting close together with their hats in their hands and looking around furtively now and then. Finally one of them leaned toward the other and addressing him in a husky voice, said: "The old man has gone, eh?" "Yes," said the other, shaking his head sadly, "he's gone. The last time I saw him he was the picture of health. It's tough, all right."

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

80 "A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by H. Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by E. Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. H. Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thomas J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Anderson.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. F. Oursler.
77 "The Little White Room," by Edmund Jones.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by W. Kofoed.
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "The Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89 "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. F. Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarity's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Lost Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.
98 "Counterfeit Clues," by Chas. F. Oursler.
99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "The Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
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125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
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140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
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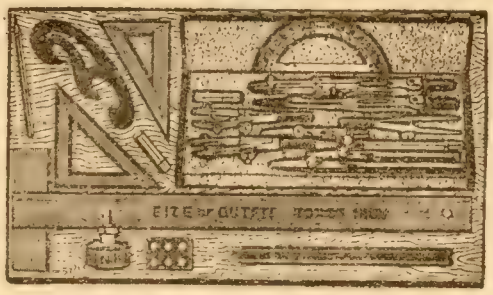

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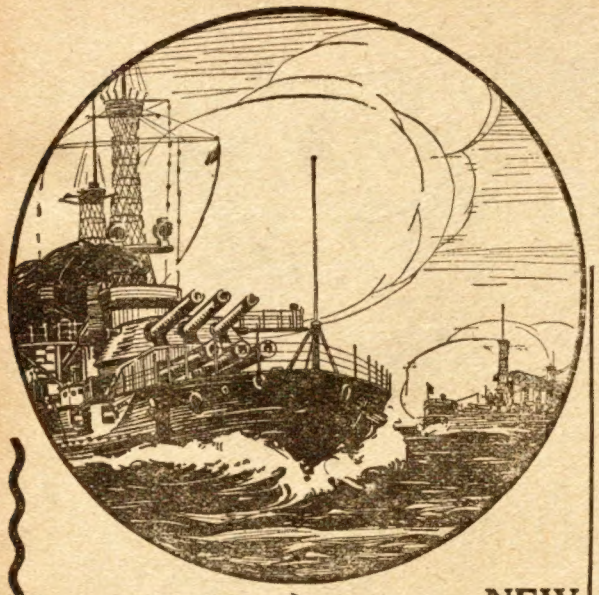

A Real Moving Picture Show In Your Own Home

NEW ELECTRIC MODEL

Remember, this is a Genuine Moving Picture Machine and the motion pictures are clear, sharp and distinct.

The Moving Picture Machine is finely constructed, and carefully put together by skilled workmen. It is made of Russian Metal, has a beautiful finish, and is operated by a finely constructed mechanism, consisting of an eight-wheel movement, etc. The projecting lenses are carefully ground and adjusted, triple polished, standard double extra reflector, throwing a ray of light to three or four feet in area.

It is not a toy; it is a solidly constructed and durable Moving Picture Machine. The mechanism is exceedingly simple and is readily operated by the most inexperienced. The pictures shown by this marvelous Moving Picture Machine are not the common, crude and lifeless Magic Lantern variety, but are life-like photographic reproductions of actual scenes, places and people, which never tire its audiences. This Moving Picture Machine has caused a rousing enthusiasm wherever it is used.

This Moving Picture Machine which I want to send you FREE, gives clear and life-like Moving Pictures as are shown at any regular Moving Picture show. It flashes moving pictures on the sheet before you. This Machine and Box of Film are FREE—absolutely free to every boy in this land who wants to write for an Outfit, free to girls and free to older people. Read MY OFFER below, which shows you how to get this Marvelous Machine.

Read These Letters From Happy Boys

SHOWS CLEAR PICTURES

I have been very slow in sending you an answer. I received my Moving Picture Machine a few weeks ago and I think it is a dandy, and it shows the pictures clear just as you said it would. I am very proud of it. I thank you very much for it and I am glad to have it. I gave an entertainment two days after I got it. Leopold Lamontagne, 54 Summer Ave., Central Falls, R. I.

SOLD HIS FOR $10.00 AND ORDERED ANOTHER

Some time ago I got one of your Machines and I am very much pleased with it. After working it for about a month I sold it for $10.00 to a friend of mine. He has it and entertains his family nightly. I have now decided to get another one of your machines. Michael Ehereth, Mandan, N. Dak.

WOULD NOT GIVE AWAY FOR $25.00

My Moving Picture Machine is a good one and I would not give it away for $25.00. It's the best machine I ever had and I wish everybody could have one. Addie Bresky, Jeanesville, Pa. Box 34.

BETTER THAN A $12.00 MACHINE

I am slow about turning in my thanks to you, but my Moving Picture Machine is all right. I have had it a long time and it has not been broken yet. I have seen a $12.00 Machine but would not swap mine for it. Robert Lineberry, care of Revolution Store, Greenboro, N. C.

HOW YOU CAN GET THIS GREAT MOVING PICTURE MACHINE — READ MY WONDERFUL OFFER TO YOU

HERE IS what you are to do in order to get this amazing Moving Picture Machine and the real Moving Pictures. Send your name and address—that is all. Write name and address very plainly. Mail today. As soon as I receive it I will mail you 20 of the most beautiful premium pictures you ever saw—all brilliant and shimmering colors. These pictures are printed in many colors and among the titles are such subjects as "Betsy Ross Making the First American Flag"—"Washington at Home"—"Battle of Lake Erie," etc. I want you to distribute these premium pictures on a special 30-cent offer among the people you know. When you have distributed the 20 premium pictures on my liberal offer you will have collected $6.00. Send the $6.00 to me and I will immediately send you FREE the Moving Picture Machine with complete Outfit and the Box of Film.

50,000 of these machines have made 50,000 boys happy. Answer at once. Be the first in your town to get one.

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